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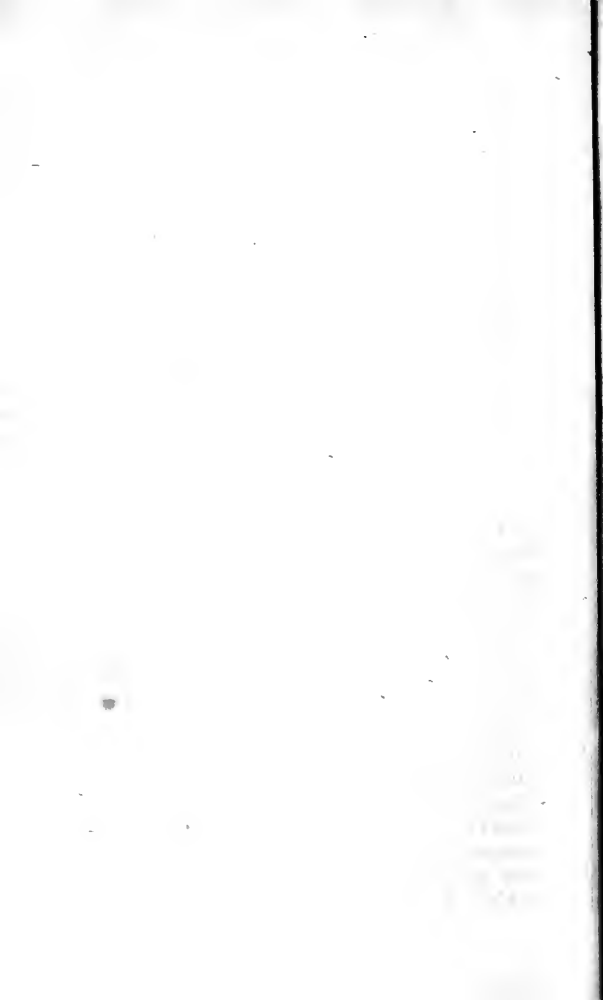
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LIVES  
OF  
EMINENT ANGLO-SAXONS.

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CHAPTER I.

EGBERT OF YORK, AND THE NORTHUMBRIAN  
KINGDOM.

A FALSE impression respecting the early Anglo-Saxon age may be made upon the mind by the biographies in the preceding volume, if attention be exclusively confined to them. In order to have a just view of the period, the individuals noticed must not be regarded as types of the condition of society, but as rare exceptional cases of mental culture, correct habits, and a sincere reception of the gospel, bearing a relation to the general state of the community similar to that of a few bright stars to a clouded nocturnal sky. Only within a very small circle was there any apprehension of the necessity and value of that redemption from the guilt and wages of sin by Jesus Christ, which it is the glory of the Scriptures to

declare ; any humble and cordial reliance on it ; any experience of its spiritual and saving power, and conscientious efforts, as the consequence, to walk according to its ordinances and commandments. Beyond this circle, a ceremonial change from the profession of paganism to that of Christianity is the utmost that is apparent. The new religion, imperfectly manifested, and in various respects misrepresented, came to the mass of the nation "in word only," improving, to a certain extent, exterior appearances, but not effecting that change of the heart and life which the truth as it is in Jesus is designed to accomplish. The nominal adoption of Christianity was induced by the influence of authority, or the force of example, to which also the charm of novelty contributed, together with a persuasion on many minds of its superiority and truth, undoubtedly strong and deep-rooted, though not intelligently and cordially embraced. Yet pagan superstitions blended with Christian forms in the habits of many. In great numbers, too, the laity connected the zealous observance of ecclesiastical rites with gross sensual indulgence, while among those devoted to the service of the church there was a class, by no means inconsiderable, not only disqualified for their vocation by want of literary attainments, but addicted to the most dissolute practices. These painful particulars become increasingly apparent as we proceed towards the middle of the eighth century. Hence the canons

repeatedly passed to uproot surviving heathenism, to stem the torrent of popular vice, repress sacerdotal immorality, and urge the attainment of the most ordinary competency for giving instruction upon the teachers of the people.

Still, while the great majority remained far distant from a truly Christian condition, there was an extensive change in profession, leading to usages which involved so large an amount of self-sacrifice, as to indicate the existence of a deep impression that truth was on the side of the Christian system, however mistakenly its rules of life were interpreted, and however some of its all-glorious doctrines were thrown into concealment by that cloud of vain devices which the authority of tradition associated with them. "Not only," as Mr. Kemble remarks, "do we see the high nobles and the near relatives of kings among the bishops and archbishops, but kings themselves—warlike and fortunate kings—suddenly and voluntarily renouncing their temporal advantages, retiring into monasteries, and abdicating their crowns, that they may wander as pilgrims to the shrines of the apostles at Rome. We find princesses and other high-born ladies devoting themselves to a life of celibacy, or separating from their husbands to preside over congregations of nuns; well-descended men cannot rest till they have wandered forth to carry the tidings of redemption into distant and barbarous lands; a life of abstinence and hardship, to be crowned by a martyr's death, seems to have been hungered

and thirsted after by the wealthy and the noble—assuredly an extraordinary and an edifying spectacle among a race not at all adverse to the pomps and pleasures of worldly life.” Illustrations of the preceding remarks will be supplied in tracing the career of Egbert of York, and in some of the subsequent chapters, as well as evidences of the deep ungodliness grafted upon the monastic institute and the practice of pilgrimage.

EGBERT, one of the intimate friends of Bede, was born in the kingdom of Northumbria, probably about the year 678, and belonged to the royal house. His childhood was passed at Hexham, under the tutelage of Eata, the bishop; and upon reaching manhood he repaired to Rome, with his brother Egred, to inspect the wonders of the city, and become further qualified for the discharge of ecclesiastical duties. The brother did not live to return, but Egbert was there admitted to deacon's orders, which brings us to the year 703, when he was of the age of twenty-five, the earliest term fixed by the canons for admission to that rank. In 729, the Northumbrian throne falling vacant, his cousin, Ceolwulf, was placed upon it, whose love for piety and learning is honourably commemorated by Bede, who dedicated to him his Ecclesiastical History. This prince voluntarily renounced the sovereignty in a few years, and sought retirement from worldly anxieties; perhaps as much influenced to do so by the disturbances of his

reign, as by "a zeal for God, not according to knowledge." Upon his abdication, Egbert was brought nearer to the throne by the accession of his eldest brother Eadbert, a very able man, fully qualified for the duties of government; but he likewise closed a long and prosperous career by resigning the sceptre and the world, following no fewer than eight precedents among the Anglo-Saxon kings in this now unusual procedure.

It was during the reign of Ceolwulf that his kinsman Egbert obtained episcopal distinction, receiving the see of York upon the decease of Wilfred, commonly styled Wilfred the Younger, or the Second, to distinguish him from the eminent prelate of that name, a record of whose life has been given. The dates assigned to his elevation by the ancient writers are discordant, but it must have occurred in the year 732, as there is no disagreement concerning his death in 766, at which time his pupil Alcuin expressly states that he had governed the see thirty-four years—*rexit hic ecclesiam triginta et quatuor annis*. This agrees with a notice appended by an unknown hand to Bede's Ecclesiastical History: "In the year from the incarnation of our Lord 732, Egbert was made bishop of York in the room of Wilfred." The appointment of the Anglo-Saxon prelates was a branch of the royal prerogative, exercised generally with the consent of the witenagemot. The following are examples from the Saxon Chronicle: "971. This year died archbishop

Oskytel ; he was first consecrated bishop of Dorchester, and afterwards of York ; by favour of king Edred and of all his witan, he was consecrated archbishop." "995. In this year appeared 'cometa,' the star, and archbishop Sigie died ; and Alfrie, bishop of Wiltshire, (afterwards Salisbury,) was chosen (to Canterbury) on Easter-day, at Amesbury, by king Ethelred, and by all his witan." "1050. King Edward held a council in London at Mid-lent, and appointed Robert archbishop of Canterbury, and abbot Sparhafoc to London." The prelates were frequently taken from the number of the royal chaplains, a station probably held by Egbert in the court of Ceolwulf. It was common at an early period, not only for the kings, but for the wealthy and powerful, to retain ecclesiastics for domestic religious service, such parties, in later times, bearing the name of *handpreostas*, hand-priests or chaplains, as distinguished from the *tunpreostas*, village or parochial priests. Upon the appointment of a bishop, he was consecrated by his metropolitan, in obedience to a missive from the sovereign, the metropolitans performing that office for one another, or a conclave of suffragan bishops officiating.

At the period of Egbert's promotion the affairs of the diocese of York were in a state of confusion, and a vigorous hand was required to retrieve the consequences of episcopal misrule and political troubles. Wilfred, his predecessor, intent upon his own pleasures, had



neglected the duties of his station; and his example, together with the distracted condition of the Northumbrian kingdom, had operated to produce great corruption of manners among the clergy and laity. Egbert, on succeeding to his post, resolved to attempt a reformation, acting in accordance with the advice of Bede, who addressed to him a letter upon the subject shortly before his death. The epistle of the illustrious presbyter, extant among his works, deserves notice for the solid sense it exhibits, and for its references to the state of society in the north of England.

Bede's letter was written towards the close of the year 734, or the commencement of 735, and was therefore one of his last productions. It may be inferred from its object that he had been applied to by the new bishop, not only as a competent adviser, but as one whose reputation and universally respected name might stifle opposition to his plans. The personal conduct of the prelate is in the first instance referred to by his correspondent, and an allusion seems to be made to that of his predecessor in the see: "Above all things avoid useless discourse, and apply yourself to the study of the Holy Scriptures, especially the Epistles to Timothy and Titus; to Gregory's Pastoral Care, and his Homilies on the Gospels. It is indecent for him who is dedicated to the service of the church to give way to actions or discourse unsuitable to his character. Have always those about you who may assist you in

temptation : be not like some bishops, who love to have those about them that love good cheer, and divert them with trifling and facetious conversation." Bede next refers to the necessity of increasing the number of rural presbyters, and incidentally mentions that some of the clergy had not acquired the knowledge of Latin : "Your diocese is too large to allow you to go through the whole in a year ; therefore appoint presbyters in each village to instruct and administer the sacraments ; and let them be studious, that every one may learn by heart the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, and if they do not understand Latin, they may repeat them in their own tongue. I have translated them into English for the benefit of ignorant presbyters." He then adverts to some new ecclesiastical arrangements : "I am told that there are many villages in our nation, in the mountainous parts, the inhabitants of which have never seen a bishop or pastor, and yet they are obliged to pay their dues to the bishop. The best means to reform our church is to increase the number of bishops ; who sees not how much more reasonable it is for numbers to share this burden ? Gregory, therefore, directed Augustine to appoint twelve bishops to be under the archbishop of York as their metropolitan. I wish you would fill up this number, with the assistance of the king of Northumberland. I know it is not easy to find an empty place for the erection of a bishopric. You may choose some monastery for the purpose,"

The success which attended the labours of Augustine, sanguinely interpreted by Gregory as intimating the speedy adoption of Christianity in all the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, led him to contemplate the constitution of the island into two great ecclesiastical provinces, with metropolitans respectively in the south and north, each having twelve suffragan bishops. But the plan had been overruled by the longer interval required to wrest the whole country from the grasp of paganism, and by the jarring relations of the several states after embracing the Christian profession, which frequently prompted cruel wars, interfering with concert between them in ecclesiastical affairs, and loosening the bonds of civilized society. From the time when Paulinus, the first Romish missionary in the north, and the first archbishop of York, retired from Northumbria, in 632, owing to the temporary restoration of paganism, through rather more than a century that archiepiscopate remained in abeyance, the holders of the see simply ranking as bishops. At the period of Egbert's accession, the Saxon kingdoms comprised the single metropolitan see of Canterbury, with predominant authority, and sixteen bishoprics, as follows :—

KINGDOMS.	SEES.	PRELATES.
Kent . . . .	{ Canterbury . . .	Tatwine.
	{ Rochester . . .	Aldwulf.
East Saxons . .	London . . . .	Ingwald.
East Angles . .	{ Dunwich* . . .	Aldbert.
	{ Elmham† . . .	Hadulac.

\* Or Dummoc, on the coast of Suffolk, no longer in existence, having perished owing to the encroachments of the sea.

† In Norfolk. In conformity to canonical prescript for the

KINGDOMS.	SEES.	PRELATES.
West Saxons . . .	Winchester . . .	Daniel.
	Sherborne * . . .	Forthere.
	Lichfield . . . .	Aldwin.
Mercia . . . .	Hereford . . . .	Walstod.
	Worcester. . . .	Wilfred.
	Lindsey † . . . .	Cunebert.
South Saxons . .	Dorchester ‡ . . .	Vacant.
	Selsey § . . . .	Vacant.
	York . . . . .	Egbert.
Northumbria . .	Lindisfarne   . . .	Ethelwald.
	Hexham ** . . . .	Acca
	Whitherne †† . . .	Pecthelm.

Acting upon the suggestion of his friend and counsellor, Egbert sought the dormant honour enjoyed by Paulinus, and obtained the complimentary pall, the usual sign of archiepiscopal dignity, for which he appears to have journeyed to Rome in the course of the year 735. All the sees that existed, or might hereafter exist, north of the Humber, were hereby severed from the immediate jurisdiction of Canterbury. The Northumbrian king brought his influence to bear upon this proceeding, for policy of state dictated that his bishops should not be subordinate to ecclesiastical superiors subject to

transfer of episcopal sees from obscure places to large towns, Thetford was made the head of the diocese in the time of William the Conqueror, and Norwich under William Rufus.

\* Removed under the Conqueror to Old Sarum, and finally to Salisbury, the following bishoprics being also constituted out of it:—Wells, and afterwards Bath; Ramesbury, subsequently joined to Sarum; and Crediton, in Devonshire, transferred to Exeter, in which St. Petroc or St. Germain, in Cornwall, was merged.

† At Sidnacester, Lincolnshire—suppressed.

‡ Near Oxford; removed to Leicester, 737, and to Lincoln, 1088.

§ Transferred to Chichester.

|| Transferred finally to Durham.

\*\* Ditto.

†† In Galloway, included for some time in Sodor and Man, and at a later period in the diocese of Glasgow.

the sovereigns of Kent, while regal pride was flattered by the severance. Similar motives induced Offa, the powerful Mercian monarch, at a subsequent period, to seek for his kingdom the distinction possessed by Northumbria and Kent; and for a brief interval the province of Canterbury was further mutilated, by the bishops of Mercia and East Anglia becoming subject to a metropolitan seated at Lichfield. The proposed creation of twelve episcopal dioceses in the province of York was not carried into effect, as it comprehended only three suffragan sees in the Anglo-Saxon age, ultimately reduced to two.

The remaining portion of Bede's epistle contains pointed references to the lax morality of the time. He especially denounces the lay or secular monasteries as useless to society, or injurious, owing to the disorderly conduct of their inmates; and expresses the fear lest the state should want soldiers to repel an invasion, because of the excessive multiplication of such foundations. Towards the close of his Ecclesiastical History, the remark occurs, that it had become usual for the Northumbrians, nobles and private persons, to lay aside their weapons, and cease the study of martial discipline, assuming the monastic habit; and what, he inquires, will be the end hereof the next age will show. Nothing, indeed, was more common than for ealdormen, officers of the court, and opulent individuals, to assume the profession of monks, while they were only to be distinguished from the

rest of the community by name, appearance, and the privileges conceded to the order. They converted their houses into monasteries, or established new erections for the purpose, in which they enjoyed the title and authority of superiors or abbots over followers in association with them, and such of the clergy as were impatient of stringent discipline. Flattered with the vanity of legislating for a sisterhood, the wife readily followed the example of the husband, both parties acting in other respects as in secular life. Their property, invested in lands for the support of these foundations, was secured to them, their heirs and successors, by royal charter, with such endowments as the munificence or the superstition of sovereigns and private individuals led them to bestow.

It may have been the case, that a sincere wish to observe with becoming strictness the requirements of religion originated in a few instances the secular monastic bodies; but it answered the purpose of the selfish, the grasping, the indolent, and the dissolute, to adopt the practice. Though the Anglo-Saxon foundations never obtained the consideration and influence granted to similar institutions on the continent, yet important privileges were enjoyed by them. In general they were bound to pay the contributions required to keep roads and bridges in repair, to maintain the fortifications, and provide a military contingent in time of war, a triple obligation, styled in Latin *trinodia necessitas*, as necessary to the welfare of the state,

and in the vernacular language *brycg-bot*, bridge repair, *burh-bot*, town or castle repair, and *fyrð*, the army. But they were free from much that was onerous in the way of personal service; they were not taxed to the same extent as other members of the community; and in some special instances they were allowed to enjoy the protection of the state without sharing at all in its pecuniary burdens. Within their own domains, the superiors raised tolls on the transport of goods, and levied fines for breaches of the peace, augmenting thereby their resources. These advantages offered strong temptations to the cloister for worthless individuals, and called into existence a crowd of secular monks and nuns, who, living in the midst of plenty, in perilous juxtaposition, and not adopting any definite rule of discipline, nor being so directly subject to episcopal supervision as the regular monks and clergy, occasioned scandal by an unholy life. But while this was the case, it is evident from Bede's language in the following passage, that his strong views on the question of clerical celibacy influenced his representations: "Thus," he remarks, "during about thirty years, that is, since the death of king Aldfrid, our province is become mad with that insane error to such a degree, that there has been scarcely an earl who in the days of his earldom has not obtained for himself a monastery of this description, and introduced his wife there by the same iniquitous transaction; and this wicked custom becoming

prevalent, even the ministers and attendants of the king do the same thing. And thus, perverting the order, there are found very many who call themselves at the same time abbots and earls, or ministers, or attendants of the king."

We are not informed what steps were taken by Egbert for the correction of abuses and a reformation of manners, but the popular tendency of the age was too strong to be arrested by his efforts. The irregularities complained of, supported by the weakness and corruption of human nature, not only continued in full force, but acquired greater prevalence, the monastic garb being assumed by many for the furtherance of licentious views, and as a pretext for subsisting upon the bounty of the public.

Egbert was distinguished by his love of knowledge, and exertions for its dissemination marked his prelacy. The monastic school of York acquired in his time that renown for which it was celebrated on the continent, embracing a wider sphere of instruction than was to be found at that period in any school of Gaul or Spain. Youths of the noblest families were attracted to it from a distance, to be taught the rules of grammar, other liberal arts, and the various branches of theology. It was superintended by the archbishop himself, assisted by Aelbert, one of his relatives, who succeeded him in the archiepiscopal dignity. They divided the subjects of tuition between



them, Egbert undertaking the explanation of the New Testament, and Aelbert the sciences and general literature. A more particular enumeration of the subjects of study mentions grammar, rhetoric, jurisprudence, poetry, astronomy, natural history, mathematics, chronology, and the sacred writings. Many distinguished men issued from this seminary; among others, Alcuin, the confidant and instructor of Charlemagne, who, in one of his letters written to the fraternity of York, observes, that it had watched over the tender years of his childhood with a mother's love, had borne with his thoughtless boyhood with pious patience, and with fatherly chastisement had brought him up to man's estate.

The judicious munificence of the archbishop was further signalized by the foundation of a library, containing many of the great works of heathen antiquity. A catalogue is given by Alcuin, who ultimately became librarian. "Here," says he, "may be found monuments of the ancient fathers, works produced in Latium by the Romans themselves, and those which were transferred to them from the glorious land of Greece; truths received by the Hebrew nation from above, which Africa has with pure light extended." Omitting productions of minor importance, there were, of the fathers and ecclesiastical writers, the works of Jerome, Hilary, Ambrose, Augustine, Athanasius, Gregory, pope Leo, Basil, Fulgentius, Cassiodorus, Chrysostom, and Victorinus; of

natives, Bede and Aldhelm; of historians and philosophers, Orosius, Boethius, Pompeius, (or Justin,) Pliny, Aristotle, and Cicero; of poets, Sedulius, Juvencus, Alcimus, Clemens, (or Prudentius,) Prosper, Paulinus, Arator, Fortunatus, Lactantius, Virgil, Statius, and Lucan, and of grammarians, Probus, Phocas, Donatus, Priscian, Servius, Eutychius, Pompeius, (or Festus,) and Commianus. The catalogue occurs in Alcuin's epic poem on "The Archbishops and Saints of the Church at York," wherein he versifies passages relating to the city in Bede's history, and celebrates its dignitaries subsequent to the date of that production. The following is an imitation of the original Latin :—

" Here, duly placed on consecrated ground,  
 The studied works of many an age are found ;  
 The ancient fathers' reverend remains,  
 The Roman laws which freed a world from chains ;  
 Whate'er of lore passed from immortal Greece  
 To Latian lands, and gained a rich increase ;  
 All that bless'd Israel drank in showers from heaven,  
 Or Afric sheds, soft as the dew of even.  
 Here Jerom teaches still a numerous race,  
 And Hilary's sense admiringly we trace,  
 While Ambrose, guide alike of church and state,  
 Joins with Augustin, eminently great,  
 And holy Athanasius—sacred name!  
 The worth of truth and knowledge to proclaim.  
 Whate'er of learned fame Orosius caught,  
 Whate'er the lofty Gregory hath taught,  
 Or Leo, pontiff, with instruction fraught ;  
 With all that shines illustrious in the page  
 Of Basil eloquent, Fulgentius sage ;  
 And Cassiodorus, with a consul's power,  
 The wise improver of each passing hour ;  
 And Chrysostom, whose works from west to east,  
 To thoughtful minds present an ample feast ;  
 All that Adhelmus wrote, and Beda penned,  
 Is kept in store, and treasured as a friend.  
 Lo ! Victorinus and Boethius here,  
 With writers of the ancient days appear.

Lo! sober history opes her golden mines,  
 In Justin's page, by Pliny's copious lines.  
 The Stagyrite his various gifts bestows;  
 Vehement rhetoric in Tully glows.  
 Here you may listen to Sedulian lays,  
 While sweet Juvencus claims his meed of praise.  
 Alcimus, Clemens, Prosper, strike the lyre,  
 Paulinus and Arator join the choir.  
 What Fortunatus and Lactantius wrote;  
 What Virgil pours in many a pleasing note;  
 What Statius, Lucan, and the polished sage  
 Whose art of grammar guides a barbarous age;  
 In fine, whate'er th' immortal masters taught  
 Is here, in rich variety of thought;  
 And as the names sound from the roll of fame,  
 Donatus, Phocas, Priscian, Probus, claim  
 An honoured place;—and Servius joins the band;  
 While with a mien distinctive of command,  
 Eutychius, Pompey, Commianus, rise  
 In all the lore antiquity supplies.  
 Here the pleased reader cannot fail to find  
 Other famed masters of the arts refined,  
 Whose numerous works, penned in a graceful style,  
 Delight the student, and all care beguile,  
 Whose names, a lengthened and illustrious throng,  
 I wave at present, and conclude my song."

McNICOLL (altered.)

It will be perceived that Aristotle is the only  
 Greek classic enumerated. The fact of his  
 works being found at York in the middle of the  
 eighth century, sufficiently disproves the oft-  
 repeated assertion, that modern Europe is  
 indebted to the Arabs for a knowledge of the  
 writings of the Stagyrite.

Considering the scarcity and high price of  
 books, the collection at York was quite extra-  
 ordinary, and had very few rivals on the con-  
 tinent. Alcuin, as director of the monastic  
 school at Tours, makes the following reference  
 to it in a letter to Charlemagne, in 796: "I  
 here feel severely the want of those invaluable  
 books of scholastic erudition which I had in my

own country, by the kind and most affectionate industry of my master, and also in some measure by my own humble labours. Let me, therefore, propose to your excellency that I send over thither some of our youth, who may collect for us all that is necessary, and bring back with them into France the flowers of Britain." From the patronage afforded to learning by Charlemagne, and the influence of his correspondent, it might naturally be inferred that the request was granted; but we have express information that one of Alcuin's coadjutors undertook a journey to York, at the head of a commission, no doubt in consequence of the desire expressed. Copies were made of various works by the commissioners, which were transcribed and multiplied at Tours, and dispersed among the principal libraries forming in the Carlovingian monarchy. The York collection remained till the reign of king Stephen, when it was destroyed by fire, along with a great part of the city.

The fame of Egbert rests upon his concern to improve the character of his clergy, his efforts for the instruction of the youth of Northumbria, and his own literary remains. The latter are of no importance in themselves, but are highly valuable as illustrations of the age in which they were produced. They include a manual of ecclesiastical polity, "*De Ecclesiastica Institutione*," written in the form of a dialogue, soon after his advancement to the prelacy; and a collection of extracts,

*Excerptiones*, compiled for the most part from the fathers and canonists on important points of discipline. The excerpts, or canons, amount to one hundred and sixty-three, and were prepared in the year 740.

*Excerpt 5* declares, "that the priests are to take tithes of the people, and to make a written list of the names of the givers; and according to the authority of the canons, they are to divide them in the presence of men that fear God. The first part they are to take for the adornment of the church; but the second they are in all humility mercifully to distribute with their own hands for the use of the poor and strangers; the third part, however, the priests may reserve for themselves." In the absence of a poor-law specially provided by the state, the Anglo-Saxon church took upon itself the task of relieving the impoverished classes out of its own resources, deeming it a Christian obligation, the state simply taking care, by positive enactment, that the commonwealth should furnish the clergy with the means of effecting an object vital to its welfare. Hence the tripartite or quadripartite division of tithes, by which a third or fourth portion was to be appropriated to the poor—an arrangement imposed by ecclesiastical canons as a precaution against sacerdotal cupidity, and sanctioned by legislative authority in order that the necessary funds might be forthcoming. In the Confessional of Egbert, another of his works, he puts the exhortation into the mouth of the

priest to be addressed to the penitent: "Be thou gentle and charitable to the poor, zealous in almsgiving, in attendance at church, and in the giving of tithes to God's church and the poor." The same obligation applied with equal force to other branches of ecclesiastical revenue, as *church-shot*, a regular assessment upon houses; *bots*, or fines, money payments in lieu of the penance of a fast; and the casual oblations of individual bounty, which devotion or superstition, in no unimportant measure, added to the requirements of the canon and civil law. Egbert enjoined that a portion of the spoil gained in war should be applied to charitable purposes, which he estimated at no less than a third of the whole booty; and he called upon the over-wealthy to punish themselves for their folly by large contributions: "Let him that collecteth immoderate wealth, for his want of wisdom, give the third part to the poor." In addition to these sources of relief for the children of want and infirmity, there was the *xenodochium*, or *hospitium*, a kind of hospital for the entertainment of the houseless and the wayfarer, which every great church and monastery comprised among its necessary buildings, with similar eleemosynary foundations, upon a smaller scale, established without the walls of churches in the rural districts, in which poor travellers and vagrants were provided for three days with board and lodging.

*Excerpt 6* enacts, "that every priest do, with great exactness, instil the Lord's Prayer

and Creed into the people committed to him, and show them to endeavour after the knowledge of the whole religion, and the practice of Christianity." Among the immoral practices of the unworthy clergy, intoxication seems to have been most common. It was one of the besetting sins of the Anglo-Saxons, subsequently strengthened by intercourse with the Danes. Hence, *Excerpt 14* states, "that none who is numbered among the priests cherish the vice of drunkenness, nor force others to be drunk by his importunity."

*Excerpt 19* enjoins, "that no priest swear an oath, but speak all things simply, purely, truly. The 25th orders, "that bishops and priests have a house for the entertainment of strangers not far from the church." The 73rd decrees, "that ecclesiastical property, if stolen, be rendered fourfold." The 148th enacts, "that no Christian observe pagan superstition, but express all manner of contempt towards all the defilements of the Gentiles." The 155th says, "that a clerk ought not to bear arms, nor to go into the wars, but rather trust in the Divine defence than in arms." It is evident that some of the archbishop's instructions were very loosely copied from foreign sources, for the 7th is to the effect, "that all priests pray assiduously for the life and empire of our lord the emperor, and for the health of his sons and daughters."

The pagan superstitions referred to in the 148th excerpt were especially rife in the more

secluded and mountainous parts of the country, and retained their hold upon the popular mind to a very late date, in spite of ecclesiastical injunctions and the prohibitions of the secular law. The use of lots remained long in vogue as a means of looking into futurity; and the belief was common that auguries of good and evil might be founded upon days and seasons. Thus, an Anglo-Saxon manuscript in the Cottonian collection states, that "the first day of the moon is propitious for all kinds of work; he who falls ill on that day will languish long and suffer much; the infant who is then born will live. The second is also a propitious day; good for buying, selling, embarking on ship-board, beginning a journey, sowing, grafting, arranging a garden, ploughing land; theft committed on this day will be soon and easily detected; a person who falls sick will soon recover; the child born will grow fast, but will not live long. The fourth day of the moon is good for beginning works, as building mills and opening drains; the child born on this day will be a great politician. The sixth day of the moon is favourable for hunting. The eighth day is good for changing bees; but he who falls sick on this day will suffer a long illness, and will not recover. A child born on the tenth day of the moon will be a great traveller; and if born on the twenty-first he will become a bold robber." There was also a general faith in the existence of swarms of unearthly though sublunary spirits, elves and fairies, some bene-



volent, others simply mischievous, and others positively demoniacal, interfering in the affairs of life; and those diseases of a mysterious character, for which no outward cause could be assigned, were attributed to the agency of the latter classes. The belief was likewise strong in the sinister influence of the *evil eye*, as a cause of misfortune in the shape of bodily ailments and baffled projects. Thus Beowulf, the hero of a poem, is warned in it of the dangers that beset the warrior:—

“Now is the bloom of thy strength  
for a little while;  
soon will it be  
that sickness or the sword  
shall part thee from thy power,  
or clutch of fire,  
or wave of flood,  
or gripe of sword,  
or javelin’s flight,  
or ugly age,  
or *glance of eye*,  
shall oppress and darken thee.”

Particular herbs were supposed to act as charms and magical spells against the evil eye and ghostly peril, as mugwort, *artemisia vulgaris*, a common plant in our hedges and waste places. Hence the recommendation is extant: “When any man will begin a journey, let him take in his hand the herb *artemisia*, and have it with him; then he will not be much fatigued in his journey; and also it drives away devil-sicknesses, and in the house where it is kept it hinders evil cures, and also it averts the eyes of evil men.”

But the most decided traces of surviving

heathenism among the Anglo-Saxons appears in reverential rites referring to the ancient gods, in a sacred regard being paid to the sites of heathen temples in honour of the god of the place, and in superstitious respect for various natural objects, especially trees, wells, and *frithsplots*, plots or patches of ground encircling some stone, tree, or well, considered sacred, in which criminals claimed sanctuary as on holy soil. The laws passed to prohibit well and tree worshipping prove its existence under modified forms to a comparatively late period; and among wells, the salt springs were regarded as peculiarly worthy of honour, an opinion common to all the nations of Germanic descent. That fondness for relics, and excessive veneration for the bones of saints, a remarkable characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon church, Lappenberg supposes, with great probability, to have been promoted by uneradicated heathen notions concerning the dead, held by the German tribes, who solemnly buried the remains of their countrymen in barrows, threw up vast mounds over them, thinking to conquer in battle with the aid of the corpses of their chieftains; and undoubtedly the irrational but picturesque experiment of the ordeal or judgment, brought by the Saxons into Britain, which assumed that the body of a murdered person would begin to bleed on the approach of the murderer, implies the presence of supernatural powers in the corpse. On the other hand, the investiture of certain

material substances used in religious service with a character of awful sanctity, according to Romish custom, as water, oil, and the elements of the eucharist, contributed to promote some heathen superstitions among a rude and ignorant populace, as those relating to the eradication of disease by appliances not naturally adapted to effect the object, but acting as amulets, charms, and magical medicaments. To repress the grosser traces of ancient heathenism, the council of Cealchythe,\* held in 785, ordained in its 19th canon, "that every Christian take example by catholic men, and if any pagan rite remain, let it be plucked up, despised, and rejected." A century and a half later, the canons enacted under Edgar state: "We enjoin, that every priest zealously promote Christianity, and totally extinguish every heathenism; and forbid well worshippings, *wilweorthunga*, and necromancies, *licwiglunga*, and divinations, *hwata*, enchantments, *galdra*, and man worshippings, *manweorthunga*, and the vain practices which are carried on with various spells, and with frithsplots, and with elders,† and also with various other trees, and with stones, and with many various delusions,

\* An unknown site. Ingram identifies it with Challock in Kent, but the Saxon name of that place was Cealfloca.

† This tree was held in great veneration by the old Saxons. Grimm relates, that when they had to lop it they usually repeated this prayer: *Frau Ellhorn gib mir was von deinem Holz, dann will Ich dir von meinem auch was geben, wann es wächst im Warde*; that is, "Lady Elder, give me some of thy wood, then will I also give thee some of mine, when it grows in the forest." This was generally repeated kneeling, with head uncovered, and folded hands.

with which men do much of what they should not." This injunction refers to a period when contact with the pagan Danes had probably had the effect of reviving the popular heathenism. Even at the present day, names and usages, traditionally handed down, preserve the memory of old superstitions. In several localities, the Yule feast, *geol*, is still extant as the term for Christmas ; and in the Peak of Derbyshire, the custom of dressing the wells with flowers, annually observed on Ascension-day, is a relic of that religious veneration which our ancestors paid to the fountains of water.

Two other pieces composed by Egbert remain, a Confessional and Penitential, which may be considered as forming one work, written in Latin, with an Anglo-Saxon version for the benefit of those who were only acquainted with their native tongue. "These capitulars," a paragraph states, "Ecgyrht, archbishop in Eoforwic, (York,) turned from Latin into English, that the unlearned might the more easily understand them." This document interdicts some singular customs to which the people were prone, as that of women taking the blood of their husbands as a medicine, a practice derived from their barbarous age, probably alluded to in the canons of the council of Cealchythe, where it is stated, that "if any one should undergo this blood-letting for the sake of God, he would on that account receive great reward ; but whoever does it out of heathen superstition, does no more advance his salvation

thereby, than the Jews do by bodily circumcision, without sincere faith." Directions are given with reference to the use of food, founded upon the Levitical distinctions between the clean and the unclean among animals, and upon the recommendation adopted by the apostles at Jerusalem out of deference to Jewish prejudices, "that ye abstain—from blood, and from things strangled," Acts xv. 29. All the Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical authorities agree upon the point expressed in the language of a synodal decree, *Riht is thæt ænig Christen man blod ne thycge*; "Right is that any Christian man take not blood." Domestic poultry that had tasted human blood were not to be eaten until after an interval of three months; fowls and other birds suffocated in nets were not to be eaten, even though a hawk should have bitten them; honey might not be eaten if the bees killed in it remained a whole night; but fish was allowed, though met with dead, as being different from land animals. Express permission is given to eat hares, horse-flesh, and swine's-flesh, though swine were held to labour under some kind of uncleanness. Among animals deemed specially unclean are the weasel and mouse. From the oriental aspect of these regulations, it is probable that their introduction into England originated with the Asiatic prelate of Canterbury, Theodore of Tarsus. The archbishop also lays down the rule, that a priest or deacon ought not to be a *gerefa*, sheriff, or to have any concern with

secular business—a provision which was not attended to at a later date, the name of Wulf-sige, *preost*, occurring as sheriff of Kent.

But the chief design of Egbert was to prescribe the discipline demanded by religion in cases of crime and immorality, one of the most objectionable features of Anglo-Saxon theology, and, as the event proved, one of the most delusive and mischievous modes that could have been devised to deal with human corruptions, aggravating the delinquency it was designed to check. The opinion was universally held, that every sin must be visited by some corresponding penalty. It was not, however, for the ignorant sinner to estimate the demerit of his offences, and duly apportion the judicial infliction. Ecclesiastics claimed the adjustment of this affair by virtue of their office, as the religious instructors of the people, “stewards of the mysteries of God,” supposed to be alone equal, by superior knowledge, to a duty so grave and delicate. Among their functions, what is technically called *jurisdictio fori interni*, jurisdiction in matters of conscience, specially belonged to the episcopal order, the inferior clergy officiating as their delegates, administering their decisions. Hence, archbishops and bishops drew up codes of instruction for the guidance of their subordinates, which either embody the results of their own judgment, or the views of preceding casuists, recommended to general adoption by their personal reputation, or by church usage. To this class of

writings, the Confessional and Penitential of Egbert belong, afterwards standard authorities of the Anglo-Saxon church, in the production of which he imitated the example of the Canterbury metropolitan, Theodore, in the preceding century, who compiled a famous manual of the same kind, upon which that of the York prelate is founded. Particular sins are specified, often with odious minuteness, illustrating the prevalence of depraved and brutish habits; and penalties are assigned to each, differing in their severity according to the heinousness of the offence.

It admits not of the slightest doubt, that the objects sought by Theodore and Egbert, and the spirit in which they laboured, were pure and good, but a beneficial purpose was defeated by the erroneous measures adopted to effect it, which involved the substitution of carnal ordinances and human inventions for the "truth as it is in Jesus," while a foundation was laid by their penitential system for that superstructure of monstrous impiety which the papal power ultimately built upon it. Yet, in some important respects, their penitential doctrines differ from those of the modern Romish church. The subject deserves a few statements in detail.

1. Confession of sin to God and to his ministers is enjoined by Egbert as an incumbent duty; but instead of confession in the abstract to the priest being made an indispensable condition of pardon, according to the dogmas of the church of Rome, Theodore's Penitential expressly pro-

nounces confession to God alone sufficient for spiritual safety. 2. Penalties were not attached to particular sins as a formal efficacious mode of obtaining absolution in the sight of God by their endurance—a tenet of Romanism. Hence, after undergoing the discipline prescribed, the offender, in a certain instance, is admonished “ever earnestly to repent of his misdeeds, as far as he may, because it is unknown how acceptable his amends may be with God.” 3. The arrest of crime, and the improvement of public morals, were the objects, undoubtedly, contemplated by the Anglo-Saxon penitentialists in vigorously exacting for every offence a proportionable penalty. Hence, cases of wilful vice and outrage are not only referred to as proper subjects for discipline, but such involuntary actions as ignorant false-swearing, and what now bears the name of justifiable homicide: “He who is led on to an oath, and knows nothing therein but right, and he so swears with the other men, and afterwards knows that it was false, let him fast three lawful fasts;” \* “If a man slay another in a public fight, or from necessity, when he is defending his lord’s property, let him fast forty nights.” 4. While a highly laudable object was aimed at, and honest intentions were exemplified by the parties who contemplated it, great ignorance of human

\* The seasons of abstinence distinguished as legitimate or lawful fasts were four in number, one in every quarter of the year, and each lasting a week. Every person above twelve years of age was then required to abstain from food until noons, or three in the afternoon.



nature, and neglect of the counsels of the Scriptures, are manifest in their methods of dealing with the depravity of the times. The sinful propensities natural to mankind are not to be chained and subdued by outward appliances and bodily discipline, however onerous ; and utterly in vain is an abatement of practical ungodliness expected, while the cause of it remains untouched—the depraved heart, “ the carnal mind,” which “ is enmity against God.” The means adequate to the end are not more efficacious than simple—“ the gospel of the grace of God,” the message of mercy, “ that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,” 2 Cor. v. 19 ; and “ commandeth all men everywhere to repent,” Acts xvii. 30 ; “ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” John iii. 16. This message involves the information of the mind with the knowledge of truth, duty, and responsibility, as revealed in the word of God ; the impression of the conscience, and the direction of the individual man to the throne of grace, as a personal suppliant, depending upon the merits of the crucified Redeemer, through whose mediation the Divine Spirit will be given to sanctify the heart and purify the life. 5. Whatever good effect upon the community the system of attaching penalties to offences was calculated to have, abstractedly considered, it was frustrated by the mischievous

principle of commutation, adopted to meet the offender's plea of infirmity or inability, according to which the obligation of a fast might be avoided by a pecuniary offering to the church—a cheap equivalent to the rich—or by the repetition of a certain number of psalms—an easy concession to the poor. This arrangement was in harmony with the civil law of the Anglo-Saxons, which admitted of money fines for crimes against society. 6. Unable to appreciate the nice distinctions of ecclesiastics, the popular mind accepted the imposed penalties as the price of absolution; and hence rushed to “commit iniquity with greediness,” so easily compounded for after its indulgence.

Though nothing could be more removed from the views and intents of Theodore and Egbert than such an issue, yet it not unnaturally grew out of the penitential discipline so minutely detailed and authoritatively imposed. The case may, therefore, be accepted as a warning example of the gigantic evils in which we may be implicated by not rigidly regarding “the Bible, and the Bible alone,” as the rule of faith and practice, not to be added to, and not to be subtracted from. This reverent homage its testimony demands and deserves, as being not of man but of God, and because of the gracious tenor of its message to a fallen race. The obligation is not more imperative than is the service reasonable, for the “yoke” of inspired truth is “easy,” and its “burden is light.” Taught by its counsels, the offender against the

state and majesty of Heaven learns that, without the ministration of a human confessor, he may himself approach the Father of mercies, unfolding the secrets of his soul, and deploring the acts of his life, in the assured hope of obtaining, "without money and without price," the full and free remission of sins, if pardon be sought for with a truly penitent and believing heart, through the atonement and mediation of his beloved Son. Happily this doctrine, so glorious to the Divine benignity, so consolatory to the alarmed and contrite sinner, and so purifying to the mind and life when sealed upon the conscience by the Spirit of truth, is not now, as in days gone by, hidden from men by the word of God existing only in unknown tongues, or by its official interpreters superseding its directions with the traditions of men, but is now manifested in almost every language under heaven by the translation of the Scriptures, and is proclaimed by an evangelical ministry at home and abroad. Yet, in an age when vigorous and stealthy efforts are made to recover the ascendancy of an antichristian system, we do well to remember the fearful labyrinth of error into which our fathers were conducted by it, admonishing us to contend for the supreme authority of the Scriptures, and to "prove all things" by the standard of Divine truth, before countenance is given to any opinion or usage of human suggestion.

Egbert died in the year 766. Bede's continuator states: "Archbishop Egbert, of the

royal race, and endued with Divine knowledge, as also Frithbert, (of Hexham,) both of them faithful prelates, departed to our Lord." Two years afterwards, his brother Eadbert, who had left the throne for the monastery, followed him to the grave; and "now," says Ethelwerd's Chronicle, "they both lie buried in the city of York, under the shade of the same porch." After the death of these individuals, the literary and political glory of Northumbria rapidly waned. The kingdom lingered on to the following century, but it was amid scenes of turbulence, conspiracy, and bloodshed, which compelled well-disposed subjects to leave its bounds, and constrained Charlemagne to declare that the Northumbrians were worse than the very pagans. Kings ascended the throne in rapid succession, some consulting their own safety by a voluntary retreat from the perilous eminence, others being driven into exile by rebel nobles, while not a few were treacherously murdered. Owing to the distraction of the times, and the consequent neglect of agriculture, famine desolated the country, pestilence followed in its train, and the terrible invasions of the Danes, while completing the general misery, terminated the existence of the kingdom.

## CHAPTER II.

WINFRID, THE APOSTLE OF GERMANY, AND WILLIBALD.

It would be difficult to select from the annals of our country an individual more remarkable for indefatigable activity, an intrepid spirit, singleness of purpose, and intense devotion to it under the pressure of difficulties, than the extraordinary man whose career is traced in this chapter.

WINFRID was born at Crediton, in Devonshire, about the year 680, and was educated, first in a monastery at Escancester, (Exeter,) subsequently removing to that of Nutcell, in Hampshire, one of the religious houses afterwards destroyed by the Danes, and never rebuilt. Here he rose from the grade of a scholar to that of a teacher; attained the thirtieth year of his age, when he was ordained to the priesthood; became known as of distinguished ability to the West Saxon clergy, their king Ina, and Beretwald, archbishop of Canterbury; and had his attention strongly directed to the pagan Germans, among whom his countryman, Wilbrord,\* was then labouring. To them the

\* Part i. pp. 154—161.

remainder of his days, to a good old age, was principally dedicated ; in their cause he lost his life ; and while known in ecclesiastical history by the honourable title of the Apostle of Germany, for his missionary labours, he has not inappropriately been styled the Columbus and the Cortes of the Germanic territory—a comparatively unknown world till the dauntless Anglo-Saxon explored its forests, traversed its rivers, and associated with its barbarous populations.

Attended by a few companions of kindred views, Winfrid commenced his enterprise in the year 716, embarking from London, then a commercial port of some celebrity, and sailed for Frisia (Friesland.) But political events being unfavourable to his operations in that country, through its pagan duke Radbord throwing off the yoke of the Franks, he returned to England, having had an interview with the barbarian prince at Utrecht. After a brief residence in his old home at Nutcell, he resumed his foreign designs, and set sail again from London in 718, reaching the coast of France near the modern town of Etaples, in the department of the Pas de Calais. From this place he journeyed to Rome, bearing letters of recommendation from his diocesan, Daniel of Winchester, to continental ecclesiastics, and particularly one to Gregory II., who then occupied the papal chair. Obtaining the sanction of the Roman pontiff to his plans, Winfrid crossed the Alps in the summer of 719, and travelling through Bavaria,

established himself in Thuringia, which then included the modern Franconia. Soon afterwards we find him in France, where, hearing of the death of Radbord, which opened the door of Frisia to his zeal, he proceeded thither, and acted for some time as the ally of Wilbrord at Utrecht. Returning from thence into the heart of Germany, he fixed his head-quarters at the modern Amoneburg, near Marburg, on the river Ohm, preaching with success among the Saxons and Hessians, repairing to Rome in 723 to give an account of his mission. Here he was ordained bishop, received the name of Boniface, afterwards his usual designation; and binding himself in subjection to the papal see by an oath conceived in the strongest terms, he was despatched to the scene of his former labours, invested with episcopal authority over a widely extended district.

For upwards of thirty years Boniface—as, in compliance with general usage, we must henceforth designate Winfrid—was engaged in frequent journeyings on the banks of the Rhine and the Danube, and among the dense forests of Thuringia, preaching to the wild pagans, frequently in imminent peril from barbarian violence, and compelled at times to support himself by the labour of his hands. It is impossible in a limited space to follow him step by step through his adventurous career, and, therefore, a few principal points only are selected for notice.

Among the various objects of idolatry to the

different tribes of the great German race, trees and fountains held a conspicuous place. One of their sacred trees was at Geismar, in Hesse, the region of the ancient Hercynian forest. It was an oak of venerable antiquity and vast size, and was specially venerated as the oak of thunder, *Donnereiche*, or the oak of Jupiter, *robur Jovis*. At its foot sacrifices were offered, and other rites performed. Urged by some of his converts to prove the helplessness of this object of superstition, Boniface proceeded to the spot with a party of his friends to cut it down. The pagan Hessians assembled upon the occasion, in full confidence that the gods of their country would interfere to protect the tree, and visit its assailant with their vengeance. But as it yielded to the axe and fell prostrate, while no lightning smote the authors of its fall, distrust in their divinities was awakened in the minds of the crowd, and restrained resentment for the outrage. Of the timber of the oak, Boniface erected a wooden chapel on the spot where it had stood, or near it. With signal energy he addressed himself to the conversion of the tribes from their idolatrous habits, and with such success that in the space of twenty years he is said to have received to the profession of Christianity 100,000 adults. The form of abjuration is extant, by which the German pagan renounced his former religion, and the specified superstitious customs, with the confession of faith pronounced by the convert on receiving baptism. This formulary was finally settled in



a council held at Lestines, now Lessines, in Belgium, the canons of which contain a curious list of early pagan superstitions. It may be given as a specimen of the little discordance subsisting between the language of the German tribes and the Anglo-Saxon. Hence Verstigan remarks, that the Anglo-Saxon missionaries seem to have had no need of interpreters in their preaching and general intercourse with the native Germans.

## FORM OF ABJURATION.

“ Forsachistu Diabolae?	Forsakest thou the devil?
<i>Et resp.</i> Ec forsacho Diabolae.	<i>Answ.</i> I forsake the devil.
End allum diabol gelde?	And all worship of the devil?
<i>Resp.</i> End ec forsacho allom diabol gelde.	<i>Answ.</i> And I forsake all worship of the devil.
Endallum diabol esuercum?	And all works of the devil?
<i>Resp.</i> End ec forsacho allom diabol esuercum end nuordum, thuna erende, Uuoden end Saxnote, ende allum them unholdum the hira genotas sint.	<i>Answ.</i> And I forsake all works and words of the devil, the worship of groves, Woden and Saxnote, and all the evil spirits who are their companions.

## CONFESSION OF FAITH.

“ Gelobistu in Got almehtigan, fadaer?	Believest thou in God Almighty, the Father?
<i>Resp.</i> Ec gelobo in Got almehtigan, fadaer.	<i>Answ.</i> I believe in God Almighty, the Father.
Gelobistu in Crist, Godes suno?	Believest thou in Christ, God's Son?
<i>Resp.</i> Ec gelobo in Crist, Godes suno.	<i>Answ.</i> I believe in Christ, God's Son.
Gelobistu in halogan gast?	Believest thou in the Holy Ghost?
<i>Resp.</i> Ec gelobo in halogan gast.	<i>Answ.</i> I believe in the Holy Ghost.”

However much, in the great majority of instances, the change dignified by the name of conversion might fall short of the meaning

attached to it in the Scriptures, we are not bound by evidence to the gloomy conclusion that it always did so, while generally important benefits were produced. Churches and monasteries arose in the place of heathen shrines; schools were established in connexion with them; the blood-stained altars of paganism were diminished in number; savage habits were abandoned, and barbarism began to disappear; the people became attached to the soil, and were taught to appreciate useful occupations; roving bands were transformed into settled communities; and though the reputed conversions of which Boniface was the instrument are, for the most part, very questionable as far as real religious change is concerned, he must undoubtedly be regarded as having laid upon a broad basis the foundations of civilized society in Germany. Among his other establishments that of the monastery of Fulda may be mentioned, founded on the river of that name in Hesse Cassel, among a fierce tribe of Slavi, during its early history the light of the region as a celebrated school, afterwards distinguished for opulence and power, its abbots ranking as princes of the Germanic empire. One of the original churches built by him in Saxony still exists at a little village called Gierstedt, in the duchy of Gotha.

Boniface was far from being alone in his labours. He looked to his native England for assistance, addressed a circular letter, entreating the prayers of his brethren there for the success

of his missions, and received a number of Anglo-Saxon coadjutors. While aided by Willibald, Wunibald, Witta, Lullus, and others of his countrymen, he obtained the help of Willibald's sister Walpurgis, Thecla, and Lioba, with the intent of specially taking charge of converts of their sex.

But besides the conversion of the heathen, there was another object dear to the heart of Boniface, urged upon him by the papal court, and quite in harmony with his own views, which was pursued therefore with all the energy of his nature. Among the pagan tribes of western France and eastern Germany, various Christian communities had been founded by Columbanus and the Irish teachers who attended him, or who followed in his track. They owed no fealty to the pope, rejected the principle of clerical celibacy, and were in other respects discordant from the Roman ritual, while the Frankish clergy in general, though in communion with Rome, maintained a tolerable measure of independence. In the spirit of boundless aggrandizement, and intent upon universal rule, the papal court contemplated reducing to obedience these rebel or half-submissive bodies, and found in Boniface a willing instrument for that purpose. His conduct in this instance has led to the expression of unfavourable views of his own character. But it is only just to remember, that it was not the result of obsequiousness; for while profoundly venerating the papal office, he had no

respect in the abstract for the papal person, having the boldness on one occasion to charge Zachary with simony and corruption of the canons, and to dispute the right of Stephen irregularly to ordain a bishop. No selfish views either influenced him—no thought of power or place for himself. In his deliberate convictions, the unity of the kingdom of God on earth, and the fraternization of all mankind under the care of one shepherd, seemed answered by the scheme of the popedom faithfully carried out; and hence, with hearty goodwill, he set himself to the task of teaching Gaul and Germany submission to Roman centralization. But he was repeatedly foiled in this object, and had to endure years of mortification and disappointment in its pursuit, as it suited the policy of the Frankish ruler, Charles Martel, to favour the schismatical clergy.

In 732, the new pope, Gregory III., constituted Boniface archbishop and primate of all Germany, with authority to erect bishoprics wherever he might deem it expedient; and the bishoprics of Ratisbon, Wurzburg, Freising, Eichstadt, and Salzburg, were organized under his direction. About the year 736 he visited Bavaria, returning into Hesse; in 738 he repaired to Rome, remaining there till 740; and in 741 he recrossed the Alps for Bavaria again. In the latter year, Charles Martel died. Policy of state led his two sons and successors, Carloman and Pepin, to sanction the hierarchical schemes of the papal legate; and accord-

ingly, by successive councils, held at Ratisbon 742, Lessines 743, and Soissons 744, Boniface secured one of his favourite objects, the synodical submission of France and Germany to the Roman see.

While repeated change of place, toilsome and dangerous journeys through Thuringian solitudes, were imposed upon Boniface by his efforts to plant the faith of Christ among the heathen, as well as by general superintendence of his disciples and assistants, he maintained an extensive correspondence, to which reference may be made as illustrative of his personal character, his views and difficulties, and the state of the times. The collection of letters first published in 1605 contains a hundred and fifty-two, but only thirty-nine are from his own hand, all in Latin ; the rest being addressed to him by princes, popes, bishops, nuns, and others. Our references to these letters are confined to those which have an English interest.

The earliest letter was written before he left his native country, and is addressed " To the most honourable maiden and most beloved lady Eadburga, distinguished for the wisdom of her monastic government, Winifred, the least in Jesus Christ, health !" He records to her a wild tale of supernatural adventure, related to him by the subject of it, which appears to have deeply interested the public mind, as she requested the narrative. It shows that his mind, like that of Bede, was so simple and

credulous as to be open to impositions however gross. Eadburga, an Anglo-Saxon princess, who had left the court for the cloister, afterwards took up her abode at Rome, and was often in correspondence with Boniface. She frequently sent him books, written by herself or by her scholars, for the instruction of his German converts. On one occasion he requests a copy of the Gospels to be prepared, written magnificently in letters of gold, and accompanies an epistle to her with the present of a silver *graphium* (pen.) One of her letters congratulates him upon the prospect opened for Frisia by the death of its pagan duke Radford. She was still at Rome several years afterwards, when the Saracens, after ravaging France, were threatening to pour down upon Italy, for a letter written by Boniface advises the postponement of a journey which she contemplated, till the alarm occasioned by the invaders had subsided.

Another Anglo-Saxon lady, a relative, of the name of Leobgitha, and a poetess, instructed by Eadburga, figures also among his correspondents. She says: "I ask your clemency to condescend to recollect the friendship which some time ago you had for my father. His name was Tinne; he lived in the western parts, and died about eight years ago. My mother desires also to be remembered to you. Her name is Ebbe. She is related to you, and lives very laboriously, and has been long oppressed with great infirmity. I am the only

daughter of my parents, and I wish, though I am unworthy, that I may deserve to have you for my brother, because in none of the human race have I so much confidence as in you. I have endeavoured to compose these under-written verses according to the discipline of poetical tradition, not confident with boldness, but desiring to excite the rudiments of your elegant mind, and wanting your help. I learnt this art from the tuition of Eadburga, who did not cease to meditate the sacred law." The verses are rhymed hexameters in Latin :—

" *Arbiter omnipotens, solus qui cuncta creavit  
In regno patris, semper qui lumine fulget,  
Quia jugiter flagrans, sic regnet gloria Christi  
Illæsum servet semper te jure perenni.*"

" *Th' Almighty Judge, who in his Father's realms  
Created all, and shines with endless light,  
May he in glory reign, and thee preserve,  
In everlasting safety and delight.*"

TURNER.

Boniface himself attempted poetry. Some verses of his composition are attached to his correspondence ; and the following fragment occurs, of a moral sentiment quoted from an Anglo-Saxon poet :—

" *Oft doth the dilatory man  
justly lose by his delay  
in every successful undertaking ;  
therefore he dieth lonely.*"

Addressing Nidhard, a friend in England, before his change of name, he exhorts him to condemn the things of time and sense, and study the Scriptures as the highest wisdom. "Nothing," says he, "can you search after

more honourably in youth, or enjoy more comfortably in old age, than the knowledge of Holy Scripture." Some Latin rhymes, containing an acrostic on his friend's name, accompany this letter.

His old diocesan, Daniel of Winchester, was commonly consulted as a valued adviser amidst the difficulties and disappointments of his arduous mission. From him he requested the Book of the Prophets, "which," says he, "the abbot Winbert, formerly my master, left at his death, written in very distinct characters. A greater consolation in my old age I cannot receive; for I can find no book like it in this country; and as my sight grows weak, I cannot easily distinguish the small letters, which are joined close together in the sacred volumes which are at present in my possession."

To this correspondent he appealed for direction in what manner to conduct himself towards the non-Roman clergy—a point which occasioned Boniface no little disquietude. On the one hand, his rigid hierarchical notions were at variance with the establishment of terms of fraternity with them; and in addition to this, while his opinions of their character and conduct received an unfavourable tinge from their independence of the papal see, there is reason to admit, to some extent, his representations of them as "false Christians," "immoral pastors," "adulterous priests." On the other hand, as they were favoured by the ruler of the Franks, he was apprehensive of offending



the temporal power if he avoided communion with them, and losing the civil support needed in his mission. "Without the protection of the Frank prince," he observes, "I could neither govern the people nor protect the priests, deacons, and others, consecrated to God—vain would be the attempt in this country to abolish heathen ceremonies or idolatrous sacrifices." The judicious counsel was given by Daniel in reply, to endure with patience what could not be amended; not to make a schism in the church under the pretence of purging it; to exercise discipline in the case of notorious offenders, a hint to tolerate those who were only chargeable with ceremonial differences; and apply himself to spread the knowledge of Christ among the heathen. But this advice was far from being implicitly followed, and the pope had to restrain the zeal of his agent. A letter from Gregory II. refers to his conduct, obviously likely to irritate, in rebaptizing some who had already received baptism from those whom he considered schismatics, and urges conformity "to the ancient custom of the church; for whoever is baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, it is in no way lawful for him to be rebaptized, for he receives the gift of this grace, not in the name of the baptizer, but in the name of the Trinity." Another letter from Zachary censures him for rebaptizing in a case where a priest, ignorant of Latin, had pronounced the formulary, *Baptizo te in nomine*

*Patria et Filia, et Spiritus Sancti*, instead of *Patris et Filii*.

To the Winchester prelate Boniface communicated his difficulties in dealing with the ignorant and barbarian tribes among whom he laboured. Daniel's instructions in reply are creditable to his piety and judgment. "Do not," said he, "contradict in a direct manner their accounts of the genealogy of their gods; allow that they were born from one another in the same way as mankind are; this concession will give you the advantage of proving that there was a time when they had no existence. Ask them who governed the world before the birth of their gods; ask them if these gods have ceased to propagate. If they have not, show them the consequence; namely, that the gods must be infinite in number, and that no man rationally can be at ease in worshipping any of them, lest he should by that means offend one who is more powerful. Argue thus with them, not in the way of insult, but with temper and moderation; and take opportunities to contrast these absurdities with the Christian doctrine: let the pagans be rather ashamed than incensed by your oblique mode of stating these subjects. Show them the insufficiency of their plea of antiquity; inform them that idolatry did anciently prevail over the world, but that Jesus Christ was manifested in order to reconcile men to God by his grace." Daniel, after resigning his see, died in retirement at Maimsbury, in 745.

A high value was evidently attached to the opinions of the clergy of his native country, for upon a point which brought him into collision with papal dogmas he wrote to Nothelm, archbishop of Canterbury, and to Pecthelm, bishop of Whitern. It referred to the marriage of parties sponsorially related, as that of a widow to a person who had stood as godfather to her son, to which he saw no objection, and which he had probably celebrated. His opponents raised an outcry against him at this procedure, and the pope pronounced a decision adverse to it, which led him to submit the case to the English prelates. To Nothelm he declares that he can in no wise understand how such a union can be unlawful, since we are all "in holy baptism, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of Christ and the church;" and to Pecthelm he states that the apostles, the fathers, the ancient canons, and all previous pontifical decrees, are appealed to in vain for any prohibitory verdict. The replies of his correspondents have not been preserved.

The collection contains epistles to Ethelbald, king of Mercia, and Cuthbert of Canterbury, which are noticed in the next chapter, with letters from Ethelbert, king of Kent, Alphonald of East Anglia, and Sigebald, a monarch of the octarchy. The correspondence shows that intercourse was extensively cultivated by leading individuals of the time, and it illustrates the interchange of a courteous and respectful bearing. While Boniface entreats from the Mercian

sovereign "the clemency of your highness," he is addressed by the East Anglian king as "most glorious lord." Besides these phrases of urbanity in the letters, there was a frequent exchange of personal civilities in the shape of presents. Thus, the Kentish monarch sent to Boniface a silver bason, gilt within, weighing three pounds and a half, while Boniface presented to a friend a shaggy or woolly article to dry the feet after being washed, and to another a hawk and two falcons for a diversion which he rigidly interdicted to his clergy. A correspondent likewise begs to be remembered by him in case he should meet with any medical books not known in England, at the same time complaining of the difficulty of using such works because of the foreign ingredients prescribed.

To the end of his days Boniface knew little repose of body or of mind. In 745, having remained to that period without any determinate see, he fixed it at Mentz on the Rhine, (Mayence,) under circumstances which show that his objections to the old clergy were not entirely of a ceremonial nature. Gerold, bishop of Mentz, a married prelate, having accompanied Carloman in an expedition against the Saxons, who revolted upon the death of Charles Martel, was slain in one of the ensuing battles. Gewelieb, his son, though a courtier merely, became his successor in the bishopric, and inherited his warlike propensities. He joined the united forces of Carloman and Pepin in a second attack upon the Saxons. Upon the two

armies coming in sight of each other, on the banks of the river Wisuraha, the bishop learned that the slayer of his father was in the opposite host. He immediately sent him a challenge to meet him in the middle of the river, which was accepted. Upon reaching the spot, Gewelieb exclaimed, "Behold the sword with which I avenge my father!" and plunged it into the body of the Saxon, who fell dead from his horse into the stream. A conflict between the armies followed, which ended in the triumph of the Franks. How carelessly ecclesiastical appointments had been conducted is sufficiently evinced by the elevation of a man capable of this horrid act to a bishopric; and how little the spirit of Christianity was known or respected by the Frank nobles may be appreciated from the fact, that they approved of the deed as an expression of natural family vengeance. But Boniface did not let the matter rest till he had procured the formal deposition of Gewelieb as a homicide, and guilty of various unworthy practices. He took the vacant place himself, and Mentz became the seat of an archbishopric, the ecclesiastical metropolis of Germany.

In 746, Carloman followed the example of many of the Anglo-Saxon kings in voluntarily renouncing the cares and honours of his high station, leaving the government in the hands of his brother Pepin. In a few years that prince ceased to hold it in the name of the Merovingian kings, as mayor of the palace, the dynasty

being formally set aside, as it had long been practically, and the Carlovingian line commencing in his person. The archbishop of Mentz officiated in the public recognition of this change, by anointing Pepin king of the Franks, at Soissons, in 752—the last of the sons of Merowig, a feeble scion of an enervated race, having previously entered a monastery.

Though seventy-two years of age, an archbishop and papal legate, in alliance with the powerful Pepin, from whom he might have obtained almost any favour, Boniface had no thought of spending his few remaining days in ease and dignity, but resolved to finish his public life as he had commenced it, doing the work of an evangelist among the heathen. Twice, in vigorous manhood, he had visited Frisia for the purpose; and twice more the extraordinary Anglo-Saxon was destined to go there on the same errand—the last time not to return in life: rare example of energy of character and self-devotedness, thus in old age to leave the indulgences he might have commanded, in order to face the inconveniences, toils, and hazards incident to barbaric associations, and inevitable in an uncultivated country! His third visit to Frisia took place in the year 754, after which he returned to Mentz. Having obtained the papal sanction to nominate his own successor, he resigned his dignities, and consecrated Lullus, a disciple and countryman, archbishop in his place.

Anxious for the welfare of the numerous

ecclesiastics who had been induced to settle in his see from a distance, many from England, he addressed a letter to Fulrad, abbot of St. Denis, who was in the confidence of Pepin, conjuring him to commend them to his favour and protection. "I cannot enough thank you," he observes, "for the friendship you have so often shown me in my need. I pray you to finish what you have so well begun, by informing the king that in the opinion of my friends and myself, my infirmities must soon terminate my earthly career, and by requesting that he will tell me what favour he intends to show my disciples after my death. Nearly all are strangers; some are priests, spread in different parts for the service of the church; others are monks, who, in our little monasteries, are occupied in the instruction of youth; and among them are some who have grown old with me, comforting me in my labours. I feel for them all, fearing lest after my death they be scattered abroad, and lest the people on the confines of the heathen lose their faith in Jesus Christ. Wherefore I request for them your advice and protection; and beseech you, in the name of God, to confirm Lully, my son and brother, in the see I have filled, that he may be a guide to the priests, monks, and people. I hope he will faithfully discharge the duties of the station. Another thing touches me closely: my priests who are on the frontiers of the heathen lead a very miserable life. Bread they may give, but not clothing, unless some

one aids them, as I have done." To Lullus, the new metropolitan, his farewell instructions were: "My term of life approaches: finish, dearest son, the building of the church which I have commenced in Thuringia: apply yourself heart and soul to the conversion of the heathen: finish especially the church of Fulda, and lay my bones in it. Prepare the things necessary for my journey, and with my books inclose a shroud to contain my mortal remains."

In the following year, 755, attended by three priests, three deacons, and four monks, Boniface left Mentz, sailed down the Rhine, entered Frisia, and commenced his last evangelizing mission. His addresses were heard with attention by some of the pagans, who expressed their willingness to embrace the Christian faith, and a day was appointed for their baptism. This was a proceeding which their comrades resented, and resolved to frustrate. The missionary pitched his tent for the occasion in the open fields, near the banks of a little river, not far from the modern Dokkum, in the north of Holland. It was Whitsunday-eve, the 5th of June. But instead of a peaceful rite being performed, a crowd of enraged pagans advanced, armed with shields and spears, incited to violence as much by the prospect of booty as by the idea of avenging their insulted national gods. The attendants of Boniface were preparing to resist, when he interposed: "Forbear, my sons; if we are truly taught by Scripture, we should not



return evil for evil, but good. To me the long expected day has arrived ; the time of our departure is at hand. Be ye therefore comforted in the Lord ; remember his gracious promises ; trust in him, and he will deliver your souls. Men and brethren, fear not them who can destroy the body but cannot touch the immortal soul. Rejoice in God ; fix the anchor of your hope on him who will give you the promised reward—a seat in his mansion with the glorified angels.” This was a nobly Christian attitude to assume in the hour of extremity ; free from pusillanimity ; marked with concern for the Christian conduct of his followers, and their patient endurance of a barbarous death. The pagans rushed on, sword in hand ; and while uttering these exhortations, Boniface received the crown of martyrdom, most of his companions perishing with him. His body was recovered and removed to Fulda, but finally transferred to Mentz. The murderers were disappointed in the hope of plunder, finding nothing of any value but books, which they were unable to appreciate, and, therefore, scattered over the fields and marshes. Some of these were afterwards found, and conveyed to Fulda ; among others, a book of the Gospels, written in Boniface’s own hand, a Harmony, or Canons of the New Testament, and a volume of miscellanies, containing the treatise by Ambrose, *De Bono Mortis*—On the Advantage of Death.

In the list of those who, with a single eye to

the improvement of society, have devoted themselves to it—dauntless in danger, patient under fatigue, and not disheartened by repeatedly baffled hopes—Boniface deserves a high place, however exceptionable we must deem some of the measures he adopted to secure the object. Nor has he been surpassed by many in the amount of influence finally acquired. It extended in his day over a large portion of the continent; France, Germany, Italy, and Britain, owned its power; and it was felt for centuries after his decease through the schools he founded, and the impulse which others derived from his example to attempt the overthrow of paganism in northern Europe. His personal integrity cannot be called in question; his ecclesiastical rule forbade connivance at a fault, however powerful the offender; and in relation to his great error, the staunch support yielded to the papal power, it should be remembered that in his time the papal pretensions had not been put forth, either to the extent or in the shape which they afterwards assumed, and with which we are so familiar. But upon this topic, and the general character of Boniface, the candid testimony of Milner, in his *History of the Church*, may be given: "Excessively attached as he was to the Roman see and to monastic institutions, he knew how to subdue these attachments, and make them obedient to a stronger passion for genuine piety and virtue. I am sensible that the foundation of the strong prejudices against Boniface is his attachment to the

Roman see. I cannot observe, however, that he either practised idolatry or taught false doctrine. Removed from the scene of controversy, he seems to have taken no part in the debate concerning images; he was ever invariable in opposing idolatry and immorality; he lived amidst many dangers and sufferings, and he appears to have supported for many years an uniform tenor of zeal, to which he sacrificed all worldly conveniences; and, in fine, to have finished his course in martyrdom, and in the patience and meekness of a disciple of Christ."

WILLIBALD, mentioned as one of the assistants of Boniface, deserves a notice, as exemplifying the signification of his name, *bold of will*, in a singularly adventurous career, being the first Anglo-Saxon of whom we have any knowledge who became an oriental traveller. He was a native of the kingdom of Wessex, probably of Hampshire, and early in life imbibed a wish to see foreign lands. This feeling was shared by the other members of his family, for in company with his father, an elder brother, and a sister, he left the shores of England about the year 718, sailing from a port near Southampton, and proceeding up the Seine to Rouen. Soon after gaining the continent, the father fell ill and died, the survivors making their way to Rome. Here Willibald separated from his relatives, and commenced a more extended journey, with two companions, of which a

narrative has been preserved, written from his own dictation by a nun of Heidenheim.

After visiting some Neapolitan and Calabrian cities, the party passed over to Catania, in Sicily, observed Mount *Ætna*, and departing in a vessel bound for Egypt, reached the Greek Archipelago, landing on the shores of Asia at Ephesus. The travellers trusted to foreign hospitality for the means of subsistence. We are told, that from this city "they walked along the sea-side to a large village, where they remained a day, and having begged bread, they went to a fountain in the middle of the town, and sitting on the edge, they dipped their bread in the water, and so made their meal." Afterwards, at Miletus, which had just been nearly destroyed by an inundation, "they suffered much from hunger, from which they were only relieved by God's providential mercy."

Their course was next by sea to Cyprus, and from thence to the coast of Syria, where they entered the dominions of the Saracens. On endeavouring to pass into the interior of the country, the travellers became objects of suspicion to the people, and at Emesa were thrown into prison as spies. Willibald calls the reigning caliph Emir-al-Mumerrin, emir or commander of the faithful, mistaking the title for his name. Yezid II., the ninth of the dynasty of the Ommiades, is supposed to be meant, whose conduct to the captives was marked with moderation and justice. Upon their case being brought before him, he asked whence the

prisoners came. The reply was, "These men come from the west country, where the sun sets, and we know of no land beyond them, but water only." The king rejoined, "Why ought we to punish them? They have not sinned against us; give them leave and let them go." For this mild treatment they were indebted to the good offices of a Spaniard, an officer of the caliph's household, and probably a renegade, the Saracens of the west being then engaged in the conquest of Spain.

The liberated pilgrims then bent their steps to Damascus, and were shown, at the distance of two miles from the city, the presumed site of St. Paul's conversion, upon which a church had been built. From this point they journeyed into Galilee, visiting Nazareth, Mount Tabor, Tiberias, Capernaum, and Chorazin, with the site where the Jordan enters the Lake of Tiberias, and the supposed sources of the river, at the two fountains, Jor and Dan, where they passed a night, some shepherds giving them sour ewes' milk to drink. All the celebrated scenes of the Holy Land were afterwards inspected, without any remarkable adventure, except an incident as they were proceeding from Samaria on their homeward route to the coast. "Thence they continued their journey over an extensive plain, covered with olive trees, and they were accompanied by a black, with two camels and a mule, who was conducting a woman through the wood. And on their way they were met by a lion, which threatened

them much with fearful roaring ; but the black encouraged them, and told them to go forwards ; and when they approached it, the lion, as God willed, hurried off in another direction, and they soon heard his roaring in the distance. They supposed he came there to devour people who went into the wood to gather olives. Possibly the Anglo-Saxon was mistaken as to the wild beast in question, but if not, the incident is of interest in the natural history of the Holy Land, as bringing down the existence of the lion there to the eighth century. In far remote times, the Asiatic species was common in Palestine and Syria, but its range westward has long been restricted to the immediate neighbourhood of the Euphrates.

Willibald's eastern travels extended over a period of three years at the least ; and after leaving the port of Tyre for a winter voyage to Constantinople, he remained two years more in that capital, visiting Nice in the interval, the scene of the celebrated ecclesiastical council. In company with some imperial envoys, he at length sailed for Sicily, touched at Syracuse, Catania, and Reggio, and thence passed to the Isle of Vulcano, which is mentioned in the narrative as containing "Theodoric's hell"—*Infernus Theodorici*. This island, one of the Lipari group, is the seat of an active volcano. In the dark ages of Christendom, the craters of volcanic mountains were popularly believed to be connected with the place of future punishment, a notion which the old mythology of Italy sanc-

tioned. The singular title employed originated with a legend, one of the false inventions of an unscrupulous period, which reported that upon the death of Theodoric, the Arian king of the Ostrogoths, a monk residing on the island had seen his departing spirit enter the crater of the volcano. Willibald, curious to see the interior of the mountain, endeavoured to reach the summit where the opening was, but was foiled in the attempt, "on account of the cinders which were thrown up from the gulf, and settled in heaps round the brim, as snow settles on the ground when it falls from heaven." But he obtained "a near view of the column of flame and smoke which was projected upwards from the pit with a noise like thunder." The volcano rises to the height of 2,500 feet, and is at present of difficult access, sulphurous vapour, and a pale lambent flame issuing from the fissures, visible at night, being the chief signs of its activity. It was in the year 727 that the traveller returned to Italy. He remained there for some time, becoming the coadjutor of Boniface in 739, by whom he was appointed bishop of Eichstadt, in Bavaria, where he died at a far advanced age.

## CHAPTER III.

CUTHBERT OF CANTERBURY, AND THE MERCIAN  
KINGDOM.

DURING part of the period that Egbert governed the province of York, that of Canterbury was superintended by a prelate of equal eminence, CUTHBERT, who held the see for the space of eighteen years. Though few particulars strictly personal are recorded of this individual of sufficient interest to merit attention, yet his position in the realm, and connexion with general ecclesiastical affairs, his solicitude to check that corruption of manners which was becoming lamentably prevalent in the church, and regard for the instruction of the people, entitle him to notice. Of the early part of his career, nothing is known beyond the fact of his birth in the kingdom of Mercia, and his presiding for some time over a monastery on the borders of Sussex. In that station he enjoyed the favour of Ethelbald, the Mercian sovereign, by whose influence he was raised to episcopal rank, obtaining the see of Hereford in 736 upon the decease of bishop Walstod. Four years afterwards, in



740, he succeeded Nothelm in the archbishopric of Canterbury, and held the primacy to his own death in 758. The principal event of that interval, connected with his name, is the council of Cloveshoe, called by the archbishop and king Ethelbald, which requires a few preliminary notices, referring to the Mercian monarch and the state of the kingdom.

At the commencement of the eighth century, there resided on a scarcely habitable spot in the fens of Lincolnshire, in a wretched island of the marshes, an anchoret belonging to the royal house of Mercia, who, smitten with remorse for the sins of his youth, had retired to the solitude for prayer, meditation, and the austerities recommended by the example of early ascetics. But so far from denying himself intercourse with men, Guthlac (*Goodlake*) permitted the visits of those whose object was spiritual advice and consolation. At that time, the throne of Mercia was occupied by Ceolred, a man of brutal dispositions, whose next, though distant relative and presumptive successor was Ethelbald. The young prince was an object of enmity to the reigning sovereign on account of his popularity, and being obliged to flee for his life, he wandered in disguise from province to province, often taking refuge with Guthlac. The anchoret received him kindly, with words of religious counsel and solace, and especially cheered him with the hope of better fortunes. A tender friendship was formed between them. He foretold his peaceful accession to the throne

of Mercia, and the refugee declared that in that case he would found a house on the spot to the praise of God. In 716, two years after the death of its author, the intimation came to pass, and Ethelbald proceeded to perform his promise. The wooden oratory of the recluse gave place to a stone church and monastery, afterwards the celebrated establishment of Croyland, which survived under vicissitudes to the Reformation, and was endowed with the island on which it stood by a charter commencing as follows :—

“ Ethelbald, by Divine dispensation, king of the Mercians, to all that hold the catholic faith, everlasting salvation. I give thanks, with great exultation, to the King of all kings, and Creator of all things, who has hitherto with longsuffering sustained me while involved in all crimes, has drawn me with mercy, and raised me up in some degree to the confession of his name. Wherefore it is good for me to cleave unto God, and to put my trust in him. But what shall I render unto the Lord for all things which he has given unto me, so that I may be pleasing before him in the light of the living ; since without him we have nothing, we are nothing, and we can do nothing ; for the Author of our salvation accepts with great desire our things which are least, that he may have a cause of returning those which are greatest, and joys that are infinite. Those who follow his teaching by works of mercy he comforts, saying, ‘ What ye have done unto one of

the least of mine, ye have done unto me.' Hence it is, that when I had been instructed by the advice, and urged by the prayers of my beloved confessor Guthlac, the devout anchoret, I cheerfully acquiesced," etc.

During the long reign of forty-one years, from 716 to 757, Ethelbald raised the Mercian kingdom to predominance among the Saxon states, and considered himself king of Britain, according to the signature of a charter in 736, "*Ego Ætdilbald Rex Britanniæ.*" Kent, Essex, and East Anglia, became vassal powers, while Wessex and Northumbria had a hard struggle to maintain their independence. But in the midst of his successes, and while ruling in some respects for the advantage of his subjects, the personal conduct of the king evinced how comparatively easier it is to bear adversity with fortitude than prosperity with moderation. The religious advices and admonitions he had received from the solitary at Croyland were forgotten, or remembered only to be practically despised, and whatever might have been the good resolutions formed in the hour of misfortune, they perished in the blossom. To a graceful form he united vast bodily strength and great courage, but abandoned himself to the rule of pride and sensuality. His public conduct was marked by a careful administration of the laws, liberality to the poor and the distressed; but his private life was disgraced by a libertinism which respected not the most sacred ties, and gloried in the defilement of the

cloister. The infection of high example spread through all orders of society. It became common for Mercian nobles to disdain the bonds of wedlock ; for monks to surrender themselves to a life of riot ; while nuns regarded not their vow of chastity, and monasteries and nunneries received buffoons and revellers as welcome visitors.

Cuthbert came to the primacy when this licentiousness was acquiring strength and prevalence, with some continental notoriety. He numbered Boniface among his personal friends, whose extensive correspondence with his native land, and opportunities of observing or hearing of the behaviour of the Anglo-Saxon pilgrims on their way to Rome, supplied him with ample information respecting Anglican affairs. Regarding with affectionate interest the country of his birth, Boniface addressed a letter to the primate calling his attention to various evils, suggesting measures for their repression, and exhorting him to the faithful discharge of those duties which the circumstances of the times imposed. "Let us fight," says he, "for the Lord ; for we live in days of affliction and anguish. Let us die, if God so please, for the laws of our fathers, that with them we may obtain the heavenly inheritance. Let us not be as dumb dogs, sleepy watchmen, or selfish hirelings, but as careful and vigilant pastors, preaching to all ranks, as far as God shall enable us, in season and out of season, as Gregory writes in his Pastoral." At the same

time, while anxious to stem an offensive and pernicious immorality, it was an object of ardent desire to Boniface to bring his country into complete subjection to the Roman see, and we may believe that he deemed this policy essential to the purity of the church and the welfare of religion, by securing the due enforcement of ecclesiastical discipline.

That bishops should be more attentive to the welfare of their flocks, and hold annual visitations; that they should not be allowed to hunt and hawk; that the intemperate and incontinent habits of the clergy, monks, and nuns, should be restrained—are points urged upon the attention of Cuthbert, which sufficiently reveal the gross negligence and depravity with which the church was chargeable. He is also recommended to remonstrate with the clergy and nuns on the fineness and vanity of their dress. The fine texture of the clerical vestments, half a century later, Alcuin had occasion to notice to Athelard, archbishop of Canterbury, reminding him that upon coming to visit Charlemagne he should not bring the clergy or monks dressed in party-coloured or gaudy garments, but wearing the common ecclesiastical habit.

The letter to Cuthbert closes with a reference to the evils resulting from pilgrimages to Rome in the case of women and nuns, who, removed from the restraints of home, and excited by novel scenes, fell a prey to the temptations which beset their path, and ended in profligacy a journey commenced as devotees. Boniface

declares that there were few cities of Gaul or Italy without licentious Englishwomen, and recommends the prohibition of female pilgrimage by royal and synodical authority. Such, according to the testimony of all ages, have been the common concomitants of pilgrimage, whether paid to the altars of Greek or Roman gods, to the Holy Land, the shrines of Romish and Mohammedan saints, or the sites venerated by modern heathenism.

It may be remarked in this place, that the numerous troops of Anglo-Saxon pilgrims passing through France on their way to Italy, in the eighth and ninth centuries, some royal, others noble and wealthy, contributed to enrich the foreign monasteries on the route, large donations being given in return for hospitality. St. Omers, St. Denis, and Rheims, received splendid endowments from this source. Hospitals also were established specially for the entertainment of the pilgrim travellers by the bounty of their kings, particularly one in Rome, which not only provided for the needy temporary visitor, but for the youth who might be sent to the city for instruction, and was hence called the Saxon school, *Schola Saxonum*. The institution, consisting of a church, cemetery, and other necessary buildings, is supposed to have been founded by Ina, king of Wessex. It was situated near St. Peter's, in a quarter which the English called their "borough," *burgus*. For its support a tax of a penny on every house of a certain rental was subsequently

laid, under the name of *Rom-feoh*, or Rome-scot, afterwards called Peter's pence—a source of irritation to the nation when the original design of the tax had been lost sight of. The Saxon Chronicle records in 816, “The same year the English school at Rome was burned.” It was again destroyed by fire, but rebuilt by the father of Alfred.

At the same time that Boniface addressed Cuthbert, he forwarded an epistle to Ethelbald, in which he boldly sets before the king his transgressions, and with great fervour beseeches him to amend his ways. He commences with commending what was laudable in his conduct: “We have heard that, devoted to almsgiving, you prohibit theft and rapine, are a lover of peace, a defender of widows and of the poor; and for this we give God thanks.” He then refers to his contempt for lawful wedlock, yet not for chastity's sake; to disgraceful and damnable sins, dimming the brightness of his glory before God and man, and transforming him into an idolater; to the Mercian nobles, influenced by his example, plunging into the same vortex of corruption and dissoluteness; and to the very pagans of the continent citing the conduct of the Angles by way of reproach. “Wherefore,” says he, “my beloved son, repent, and remember how dishonourable it is that you, who, by the grant of God, are sovereign over many nations, should yourself be the slave of lust, to his disservice. Let the custom of a foreign country teach you how far distant

this is from rectitude." Boniface alludes to the stringent measures adopted to preserve female honour by the old Saxons and the Winedi, the latter a pagan race, seated on the western bank of the Vistula, near the Baltic. "If then the Gentiles," he argues, "who know not God, have so zealous a regard for chastity, how much more ought you to possess it, my beloved son. Spare, therefore, your own soul; spare a multitude, perishing by your example, for whose souls you must give an account." Further to arouse the conscience of Ethelbald, he reminds him of the fate of former kings, guilty of similar crimes, alluding to his predecessor Ceolred, who died during the riot of a feast; to Osred of Northumbria, who, sunk in debaucheries, was slain in his nineteenth year, in an ambush laid for him by his kinsmen on the southern border by the sea; and to Charles Martel, whom he mentions as having perished by excruciating pain and a fearful death. "Wherefore," he concludes, "my beloved son, we entreat, with paternal and fervent prayers, that you would not despise the counsels of your fathers, who, for the love of God, anxiously appeal to you. For nothing is more salutary to a good king than the willing correction of such crimes when they are pointed out to him; since Solomon says, 'Whoso loveth instruction loveth wisdom.' Wherefore, my dearest son, showing you good counsel, we call you to witness, and entreat you, by the living God, and his Son Jesus Christ, and by the Holy Spirit, that you



would recollect how fleeting is the present life, how short and momentary is the delight of the flesh, and how ignominious for a person of transitory existence to leave a bad example to posterity. Begin, therefore, to regulate your life by better habits, and correct the past errors of your youth, that you may have praise before men here, and be blest with eternal glory hereafter."

But however the writer of these letters might mourn over the degeneracy of his country, and there is not the slightest reason to suspect his sincerity in this respect, yet his intense devotion to the papal court, and high notions of ecclesiastical prerogative, rendered it a heavy grievance and heinous sin in his esteem, that the Anglo-Saxon clergy and monastic bodies should be amenable to the exactions of the state, or to any jurisdiction but that of the Roman pontiff. His preceding reference to the death of Charles Martel rests upon no good authority, but Charles had claimed power over the property of the church, had compelled the clergy to pay war taxes and other contributions, and an idle tale was circulated of a special Divine judgment befalling him on that account. Hence Boniface complains to Cuthbert, that no cloisters were in such a state of slavery as those of the Anglo-Saxons, referring to their liability to those pecuniary assessments which were imposed upon landed possessions generally. The same subject is mentioned in the letter to Ethelbald

as one of his offences. But it rather illustrates the common sense of the government, that the religious order should be required to contribute their quota to the exigencies of the nation, enjoying the protection of the state, and largely endowed by the national liberality. It was, no doubt, upon the same principle that some monasteries were bound by their charters to harbour and entertain the king's followers and servants, as foundations which had benefited by royal munificence.

The appeal of the prelate was not without effect upon the king, but like Herod, who listened to the preaching of John, "and did many things" in obedience to his word, without any personal submission to the law of righteousness, so Ethelbald was moved to the adoption of various remedial measures, still remaining Ethelbald the Proud.

We now come to the council of Cloveshoe, held for purposes of reformation in consequence of the preceding letters. They were written soon after Cuthbert became archbishop of Canterbury, for the Saxon Chronicle states, "742. This year a great synod was held at Cloveshoe; and there was Ethelbald king of the Mercians, and archbishop Cuthbert, and many other wise men." The date, though placed later by some authorities, is evidently correct, for Ethelbald's charter, granted on this occasion, begins "*Anno DCCXLII. requi Æthibaldi xxvii.*" This charter, while making important concessions in favour of ecclesiastical foundations, maintains

their liability to the burdens usually considered irredeemable, for it states, "I, Ethelbald, king of the Mercians, grant, so long as I live, that all monasteries and churches of my kingdom shall be exempted from public taxes, works, and impositions, except the building of forts and bridges, from which none can be released : and moreover, the servants of God shall have perfect liberty in the produce of their woods and lands, and the right of fishing, nor shall they bring presents either to king or princes except voluntarily, but they shall serve God without molestation."

Cloveshoe, or Clofeshoas, the scene of many assemblies, is variously placed, by Ingram in Kent, and by Lappenberg in Oxfordshire, but Mr. Kemble expresses the conviction that it was in the county of Gloucester, and hundred of Westminster. The synod was not purely ecclesiastical, though convened for ecclesiastical purposes, but clearly a *witena-gemot*, its acts being signed by clerks and laymen indifferently. Ethelbald presided, but Cuthbert took the lead and compiled its acts. Thirty canons were enacted, directed chiefly against the negligence of the clergy, abuses in the secular monasteries, and providing for the better instruction of the people.

*Can. 3* ordains, "That every bishop do every year visit his parish ; and call to him, at convenient places, the people of every condition and sex, and plainly teach them who rarely hear the word of God."

*Can. 5* declares, "That it is necessary for bishops to go to the monasteries, (if they can be called monasteries, which in these times cannot be in any wise reformed according to the model of Christianity by reason of the violence of tyrannical covetousness,) which are, we know not how, possessed by secular men, not by Divine law, but by presumptuous human inventions."

*Can. 7* declares, "That bishops, abbots, and abbesses, do by all means take care and diligently provide that their families incessantly apply their minds to reading; for it is sad to say how few now-a-days do heartily love and labour for sacred knowledge, and are willing to take any pains in learning; but they are, from their youth up, rather employed in divers vanities, and the affectation of vain glory; and they rather pursue the amusements of the present unstable life than the assiduous study of the Holy Scriptures. Therefore let the boys be confined and trained up in the schools to the law of sacred knowledge, that being by this means well-learned, they may become in all respects useful to the church of God; and let not the rectors be so greedy of the worldly labour,\* (of the boys,) as to render the house of God vile for want of spiritual endowment."

*Can. 10* enjoins, "That priests should learn to know how to perform, according to the lawful rites, every office belonging to their

\* The heads of religious houses employed the scholars in bodily labour.

orders; and then let them who know it not, learn to construe and explain in our own tongue the Creed and Lord's Prayer."

*Can.* 14 ordains, "That the Lord's day be celebrated by all with due veneration, and wholly separated for Divine service, and let all abbots and priests instruct the servants subject to them from the oracles of the Holy Scripture." Journeys are forbidden to ecclesiastics unless absolutely necessary. The Sunday of the Anglo-Saxons ordinarily included a longer interval than what is now observed. It extended from "Saturn's-day noon," or the ninth hour reckoned from six o'clock in the morning, answering to three o'clock on Saturday afternoon, to "Monday's dawn." Its due observance is the subject of many enactments passed in the different states at different times, imposing varying penalties upon its profanation. Ina attached the loss of freedom to a freeman working on that day without his lord's command, or a fine of sixty shillings, and a priest was to be doubly liable. Edward and Guthrum ordered that Sunday trafficking should entail loss of goods, and a fine of twelve ores (thirty-eight shillings) among the Danes, and thirty shillings among the English; likewise that no one condemned should ever be executed on that day. In the law of the Northumbrian priests, it is declared: "Sunday's traffic we forbid everywhere, and every folkmete, (popular meeting,) and every work, and every journeying, whether in a wain, or on a horse, or

as a burthen : he who shall do any of these let him pay the wite, (fine,) a freeman twelve ores, a theowman (slave) with his hide, except travellers, who may in case of need convey food, and on account of war any one may, on the eve of a festival, if needful, travel between York and a distance of six miles."

The day was connected with various great events besides the one it really commemorates. Thus in the Ecclesiastical Institutes we read : "Sunnun-dæg is very solemnly to be revered, therefore we command that no man dare on that holy day to apply to any worldly work, unless for the preparing of his meat ; except it happen to any one that he must of necessity journey ; then he may either ride, or row, or journey by such conveyance as may be suitable to his way, on the condition that he hear his mass, and neglect not his prayers. On Sunday God first created the light, and on that day he sent to the people of Israel in the desert heavenly bread, and on that day he arose from death, when he before, with his own will, had suffered death for the salvation of mankind ; and on that day he sent the Holy Ghost into his disciples. It is therefore very highly fitting that every Christian man very reverently honour that day. And it is fitting that every Christian man who can accomplish it come to church on Saturday, and bring light with him, and there hear even-song." The final consummation and general judgment it was held would happen on the sacred season : "Sunday

is the first of all days, and will be the last at this world's end.'

The same canon decreed, "That on the great festivals the priests of God do often invite the people to meet in the church to hear the word of God." In the *Menologium seu Calendarium Poeticum*, or Poetical Calendar of the Anglo-Saxons, a production subsequent to the formation of the octarchy into one kingdom, the festivals observed are enumerated. They were introduced by authority of some of the kings, receiving as was customary the sanction of the witenagemot. This we are expressly told at the close of the document :—

" Now may ye find  
the times of the saints  
that men should observe,  
as the command goeth  
through Britain  
of the king of the Saxons,  
at the same time."

Mr. Fox, the last editor and translator of this relic of antiquity, remarks upon the singular coincidence between the Anglo-Saxon calendar and that of the present Reformed church, both in the days, the number, and the names of the personages commemorated. Christmas and the Epiphany are thus referred to :—

" Christ, the glory of kings,  
the illustrious Lord,  
the eternal Almighty,  
was born  
at mid-winter;  
and on the eighth day  
was named Jesus,  
Guardian of heaven's kingdom.  
Then at the same time  
numerous crowds,

many people,  
 have the first keeping of the year :  
 because the honoured  
 calends come,  
 on that same day,  
 to us.  
 This is the first month,  
 which the great people\*  
 in their calendar  
 call January.  
 And it is from thence after five nights †  
 that the baptismal time ‡  
 of the eternal Lord  
 comes to us ;  
 which the renowned  
 and eminent men  
 in this land, here  
 in Britain, call  
 twelfth-day." §

Easter is noticed as follows :—

" The month of April,  
 in which most frequently comes  
 the celebrated time  
 of consolation to men,  
 the resurrection of the Lord  
 then rejoicing is suitable,  
 widely, everywhere ;  
 so the prophet sang,  
 This is the day  
 which the most wise Lord  
 made for us,  
 the generation of men ;  
 for joy to all  
 the blessed inhabitants of earth.  
 We may not that time  
 keep by reckoning

\* The Romans.

† The computation of time by nights instead of days prevailed among the northern nations. The usage lingers in England, as instead of seven days we frequently say se'nnight, and instead of fourteen days we have fortnight.

‡ Called the Epiphany, or manifestation of Christ, as the supposed day of the triple events manifesting the Redeemer of the world ; first, the appearance of the star to the magi ; secondly, the baptism of Christ in the Jordan, when his Divinity was signally proclaimed ; and thirdly, the miracle at Cana, the first sensible expression of his Divine power.

§ The twelfth reckoned from Christmas day, anciently considered the beginning of the year.



of the number of the days ; \*  
 nor the Lord's ascension  
 up to the heavens :  
 for they always return  
 according to the predictions of the wise.  
 But the old in years  
 shall by circle-craft  
 find out the holy days."

National gratitude led to the appointment of festivals in honour of Gregory and Augustine, as instrumental in introducing the gospel to our forefathers :—

" Fierce March  
 adorned with raine,  
 furious with hail-storms,  
 is loud sounding  
 through the middle earth,†  
 the calends of his arrival.  
 Then after eleven nights,  
 the holy,  
 noble,  
 Gregory shone,  
 celebrated in Britain,  
 in God's army.

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" Then (May) the fields spontaneously  
 blow with flowers,  
 so that the joy  
 of many kinds  
 of living creatures  
 ascends throughout the middle earth,  
 gives praise to the King,  
 manifoldly celebrates  
 the glorious  
 Almighty.  
 Then it is after the number  
 of eight days and nine  
 that the Lord took  
 into other light  
 Augustine ;

\* A reference to Easter being a movable feast, dependent on the moon, and therefore not to be determined by the calculation of days.

† *Middam-geard*, the middle yard or region, a phrase designating the globe at large, which the Anglo-Saxons derived from their old mythological ideas.

happy in heart,  
 because he here in Britain  
 made earls  
 obedient to him  
 for the will of God,  
 as the wise Gregory  
 commanded him.  
 I have not heard before  
 any other man,  
 or more illustrious bishop,  
 ever bring  
 over the living sea  
 better lore;  
 he now in Britain rests,  
 among the men of Kent,  
 in the chief city,  
 near the celebrated minster." \*—Fox.

In 756, Cuthbert presided at a synod, wherein it was ordained that the festival of Boniface should be celebrated throughout England on the 5th of June, the anniversary of the martyrdom in the preceding year.

*Can.* 20 decrees, "That bishops, by a vigilant inspection in their parishes, take care that monasteries, as their name imports, be honest retreats for the silent and quiet, and such as labour for God's sake; not receptacles of ludicrous arts, of versifiers, harpers, and buffoons; but houses for them who pray, and read, and praise God."

Other regulations appear in the acts of this council, which evince a commendable anxiety to correct existing irregularities in morals and discipline, while unscriptural and pernicious practices are sanctioned, as that of prayer for

\* Augustine was buried, according to Bede, outside the cathedral at Canterbury, and soon afterwards removed into the north porch. In the year 1300, the body was placed near the high altar.

the dead, for which a brief form is given. The usage did not then involve anything analogous to modern Romish purgatorial doctrines. No decisive opinion was held upon the point, whether departed souls could be benefited by the services of survivors. The consolation of the living, and respect to the memory of the deceased, were the chief objects contemplated. At the same time, it is plain that the custom supplied a basis upon which naturally to build the dogma of the Romish purgatory—that device of the “man of sin” to strengthen the power of his officials, and contribute to their emolument, by the soul-destroying delusion of the penalties incurred by an ungodly life being capable of mitigation through their agency. Upon one point the council of Cloveshoe, while enjoining ritual uniformity to the Romish church, disappointed the expectations of Boniface. He had transmitted the canons of his foreign synod to Cuthbert, for the purpose of securing in England the same surrender of independence, and subjection to papal authority, which they expressed. But instead of this being conceded, even appeals to Rome for advice in difficult cases are discouraged by the twenty-fifth canon, and bishops directed to apply to their metropolitan in a provincial synod.

Ethelbald raised the Mercian kingdom to great political distinction, and extended his sway over the whole country, from the Humber southward to the Channel. But impatient of

vassalage, Cuthred of Wessex asserted the independence of his country, and won it upon the field of Burford, in Oxfordshire, aided by the powerful ealdorman Ethilhun. A few years afterwards, in 755, Ethelbald was defeated by one of his own nobles, an aspirant to the throne, on the hill of Segeswald, supposed to be Seckington, in Warwickshire, and either perished in the engagement, or was treacherously slain by his attendants the following night, and buried at Repton. Lingard states, that long before his death he had forsaken the vices and follies of his youth, but of this the evidence is very slight. Remains of Croyland Abbey mark the scene of his retreat when a fugitive with the anchoret in the fens; and a mutilated statue recently existing has been supposed to be a commemorative monument of the king, the original founder of the establishment.

The condition of Mercia politically brightened under the rule of the able Offa, but it was morally darkened by his sanguinary wars and atrocious crimes. Its prospect of securing permanent predominance remained fair till the commencement of the following century, when internal weakness, through the contentions of rival claimants, and incapable princes, soon rendered it an easy prey to a vigorous opponent, and it finally succumbed to the Wessex sovereign.

Cuthbert died in the year 758. By his influence, the practice is said to have been

introduced of interment in towns, instead of in their suburbs. Strange change in the habits of the children of Woden, to glory in the retired life of the cloister, and seek publicity in the tomb, whose ancestors dreaded dying in a bed as a disgrace, and laid their dead on the tops of hills, in heaths and secluded valleys, on the banks of rivers and the solitary sea-shore! Many eagerly sought interment in the interior of the churches, near the remains of bishops and ecclesiastics, in the delusive hope of ministering thereby to their spiritual safety. This led to the sites soon becoming inconveniently crowded, so that it was found necessary to restrain the practice. Hence, on the continent, at the council of Gribur, near Mentz, under Charlemagne, it was decreed that no layman should thenceforth be buried within a church; while in England, under Edgar, it was enacted, "That no man be buried within a church, unless it be known that he in life was so acceptable to God, that on that account it be admitted that he is worthy of such a grave." In the case of a church overcrowded with graves, the Ecclesiastical Institutes provide that the "place be left as a cemetery, and the altar taken thence, and set in a clean place, and a church be there raised, where people may offer to God reverently and in purity."

All the predecessors of Cuthbert had been interred in the monastery of Augustine, without the walls of Canterbury, but for some reason with which we are not acquainted, he

obtained the permission of the Kentish king to lie in his own cathedral, and anticipating opposition to this arrangement from the monks, the archbishop ordered his body to be conveyed to the tomb before his death should be publicly known. The two establishments, in fact, became involved in disgraceful and fierce dissensions with reference to the bodies of the metropolitans, the possession of their remains being not merely deemed an honourable distinction, but actually supplying an important revenue, as superstitious visitors were attracted, and offerings obtained from them. When their teachers were so blind to the spirit and practice of Scriptural religion, no wonder that the people should walk in darkness.

## CHAPTER IV.

## ALCUIN AND HIS PUPILS.

M. GUIZOT has styled this celebrated man the intellectual premier of Charlemagne ; and as his scholastic instructor, political adviser, and spiritual guide, the teacher of the royal family, and the minister of public instruction in the empire, the title is most appropriate. He was the master-spirit of the Carlovingian period, the principal light of the closing years of the eighth century, the last eminent representative of literature in the Northumbrian kingdom, and perhaps it is not going too far to regard him as the most accomplished native of England during the whole of the Anglo-Saxon period. The transactions in which he mingled are too numerous and extensive to admit of detail in these pages. The remark applies also to his writings. We are restricted therefore to a very cursory glance at his career. The name, Alcuin, or Alcwine, that is, *All-win*, is equivalent in its meaning to that of Victor and Vincentius in Latin, to Nicetas and Nicephorus, in Greek ; but to accommodate a foreign pronunciation,

the Saxon was Latinized to Albinus in France, to which the prefix of Flaccus was frequently attached, owing, as some suppose, to admiration of Horace, who bore that name. He often styles himself in his letters Flaccus Albinus.

ALCUIN was born at York, or at least in the neighbourhood, about the year 735, and was certainly in the city in his childhood. He was of noble parentage, and, as we learn from himself, related to Wilbrord. His early years were passed in the school under the care of archbishop Egbert and his assistant Aelbert, both ever gratefully remembered by their pupil. Winning the affection and confidence of the latter, he accompanied him on a journey to the continent in quest of books, proceeding to Rome, where those impressions were doubtless received which were usually made upon the minds of Anglo-Saxon visitors to the city. Returning to York, he became an assistant in the school; and upon Aelbert succeeding Egbert in the archbishopric, he rose to the rank of master, had the valuable library committed to his care, and was ordained deacon. This was in 766, when Alcuin was upwards of thirty years of age, and had acquired an extensive reputation, so much so, that foreigners came to benefit by his instructions. The new prelate dying in 780, Eanbald, a scholar, succeeded to the see, and the master was sent on a mission to Rome to receive the complimentary pallium.

At this juncture, Charlemagne was in Italy with his family. Alcuin, on his route home,



made his acquaintance at Parma, being already well known to him by common fame. The organization of his vast empire, and the improvement of his subjects by liberal instruction, were then topics of anxious interest to the monarch, who was greatly in advance of his age; and his interviews with the York preceptor convinced him of his competency to devise and execute suitable plans for the purpose. The result was an imperial invitation to Alcuin to settle in France; and an engagement on his part to do so, subject to the consent of his diocesan and the Northumbrian king.

At York, the required permission was readily obtained from his superiors, and Alcuin proceeded to France, accompanied by several of his scholars as assistants, Wizo, Fredegis, and Sigulf, who, as Anglo-Saxons, often mentioned in his writings, are entitled to a brief notice.

Wizo enjoyed the entire confidence of his master, and obtained the favour of Charlemagne, but rose to no distinguished ecclesiastical or civil position giving prominence to his name. He is the Candidus of Alcuin's letters, and headed the commission which was sent from France to York for the purpose of transcribing books in the library.\*

FREDEGIS, otherwise called Nathaniel, became one of the king's personal attendants, and was employed in various political services, eventually succeeding to the abbacy of Tours. To him, in connexion with Wizo, and another pupil

named Onias, a Commentary on the Book of Ecclesiastes was dedicated by Alcuin. Though a reproduction mainly of Jerome's exposition, as avowed by the writer, the mere transcript of a useful volume was an important service in an age when books were rare. The subject was chosen as presenting an impressive picture of the nothingness and vanity of worldly grandeur, calculated to fortify their minds against the seductive influences to which they might be exposed at court, when, as Alcuin expresses it, "they had flown from the nest of his paternal care into the open firmament of worldly occupation."

SIGULF, surnamed Vetulus, actively engaged in establishing and conducting the scholastic institutions in France, finally receiving the abbacy of Ferrière, which he held with honour to himself and usefulness to others. There is extant a life of his master which he dictated to an inmate of his abbey. To him Alcuin dedicated a short Commentary on the Book of Genesis, written in the form of a dialogue, and produced under the pressure of onerous occupations. A passage deserves quoting:—"As thou, my dearest brother, hast so long been my inseparable and faithful companion, and as I know with what ardour thou studiest the Holy Scriptures, I have collected and dedicated to thee a few questions upon the Book of Genesis, which I remember thou hast at different times proposed to me. I have done this that thou mayest always have at hand a means

of refreshing thy memory, which often loses that which it should retain, if we do not preserve those things which we desire to remember in writing. This is especially the case with us, whose thoughts are distracted by temporal business, and who are frequently exhausted by the fatigue of long journeys. As we cannot encumber ourselves with ponderous volumes, we must provide ourselves with abridgments, that the precious pearl of wisdom may be lightened, and the weary traveller possess something wherein he may refresh himself, without fatiguing his hand with too heavy a burden. There are, however, in this book many difficult questions, which at present I am neither willing nor able to solve, and concerning which thou hast not desired information. Those which are here treated of are chiefly historical, and for which a simple answer will suffice ; the others, on the contrary, require more profound investigation, and a more copious explanation."

Another of the scholars, OSULF, left York for the continent, and was betrayed into unworthy and vicious courses, to the grief of his master. "Why," he asks, in an expostulatory letter, "hast thou abandoned thy father, who has educated thee from thy childhood, who has instructed thee in the liberal sciences, and led thee in the ways of virtue, and furnished thee with the doctrines of eternal life? Why hast thou joined thyself to a troop of harlots, to the revels of the drunkard, to the follies of the vain? Art thou that youth who was praised

by every tongue, lovely in every eye, commended to every ear? Alas! alas! now thou art censured by every tongue, hateful to every eye, and cursed to every ear."

Alcuin, with his companions, arrived in France in 782, his first visit extending over a period of eight years. Settled at court, the king of course engrossed his principal attention, but he being engaged in the Saxon wars, it was only during the winter months that they had much personal intercourse, which took place chiefly at Aix-la-Chapelle, the favourite imperial residence. Of vigorous, comprehensive, and enlightened mind—which appears the more wonderful when contrasted with the barbarism with which he was surrounded, and the mode in which he had been brought up—Charlemagne was eagerly bent upon having the defects of his education remedied. Trained to the use of arms and all athletic exercises, he had not been taught the art of writing—that being deemed of no importance in a military age; and having attained his fortieth year at the time of Alcuin's arrival, he was never able to acquire the manual dexterity necessary to easy penmanship, notwithstanding great pains. He understood Latin, as it was to some extent at that time vernacular in Gaul, besides being the language of the church and of public documents, but he had no grammatical knowledge of it. No man ever applied himself more earnestly to intellectual cultivation than Charlemagne, or practised a more rigid economy of time to obtain it.

He was read to at his meals; devoted the few hours that could be snatched from political cares to instructive conversation; and sought information upon every topic interesting to an inquiring mind, or likely to be of public utility—arithmetic, astronomy, grammar, ethics, and theology. Alcuin was not appointed to any definite post, though the abbeys of Ferrière in the Orléannois, and Troyes in Champagne, were assigned to him, chiefly with the view of providing for his personal expenditure. He resided at court, or accompanied the monarch on his journeys, supplying in friendly intercourse that instruction which was needed, and advising those measures which the public welfare required. By his influence, that reformation of the ecclesiastical order was promoted, which Boniface commenced and Charlemagne vigorously pursued, though, with all his power, he failed in fully carrying out his views. While consenting to lay down arms, and forego the battle-field, so inveterate was the passion for hunting, that imperial edicts were set at nought by the clergy, and the point at length was conceded to them of killing deer, though only so many as were necessary to supply leather for the binding of books.

The royal family shared next to the king the attentions of Alcuin, and were instructed in the learning suited to their station. Some of his letters are extant, addressed to Charles, the eldest son, containing a free reference to his faults, and directions as to a proper line of

conduct. There is preserved in one of his treatises, the substance of a conversation between himself and Pepin, the second son, which shows that he adopted the usage common to the Anglo-Saxon teachers, replying to questions in such a way as to exercise the ingenuity of the questioner, and rouse reflection. Pepin asks, "What is the liberty of man?" and is answered, "Innocence." To the inquiry, "What is the moon?" he receives for a reply, "The eye of night, the dispenser of dew, the herald of tempests." The third son, Louis, who alone survived his father, and inherited his dominions as Louis le Débonnaire, was a special favourite with Alcuin, who appears to have misapprehended his character, accepting an inoffensive habit for self-command, and a natural docility of temper for cultivated submission to religious discipline. Some exhortations addressed to him remain:—

"Most illustrious prince," he writes, "seek to adorn thy noble rank by noble deeds; endeavour with all thy might to do the will and promote the honour of Almighty God, that through his favour, which is above all price, the throne of thy kingdom may be exalted, its limits extended, and the people subdued to thy government. Be liberal to the poor, be kind to strangers, devout in the service of Christ, and hold in reverence the ministers of his church, whereby thou wilt receive the assistance of their fervent prayers. Let thy conduct be upright and chaste. Love the wife of thy

youth, and suffer no other woman to share thy affections, that the blessing of God that rests upon thee may descend to a long line of thy posterity. Be formidable to thy foes, be true to thy friends, favourable to Christians, terrible to heathens, accessible to the poor, prudent in following counsel. Listen to the counsel of the old, but employ the young to execute it. Let justice and equity prevail, and let the praise of God resound at the appointed hours throughout thy kingdom, but especially in thy presence. Such pious regard to the duties prescribed by the church will render thee acceptable to God and honoured by man. Let feelings of humility dwell in thy heart, the words of truth on thy lips, and let thy life be a pattern of integrity, that it may please God to prosper and protect thee."

Gisla, sister of Charlemagne—styled by Alcuin *soror in Christo*, sister in Christ, to distinguish her from one of the daughters of the same name, whom he addresses as *filia in Christo*, daughter in Christ—often sought his counsel and assistance. His commentary on the Gospel of St. John was written at her request and that of one of her friends, whose joint epistle is prefixed to it, expressing their high regard for the sacred writings. It states: "After we had obtained somewhat of the delightful knowledge of the Scriptures, in which we were aided, venerable master, by your excellent exposition, we acknowledge that our desire daily became more ardent for these most sacred lessons; in which

are contained the truths relating to the purification of the soul, the consolation of our mortality, and the hope of perpetual blessedness ; and in which, according to the psalmist, the good man meditates day and night, accounting the knowledge of them better than all the riches of the world." In a letter to the king, Alcuin mentions some of the queries proposed to him by one of the princesses. A psalm used in the church service arrested attention by the statement, "all men are liars," and she inquired whether infants, and the dumb whose lips have never uttered a word, did not contradict the assertion. Again, of another psalm, in which the passage occurs, "the sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night," she asked whether this was not wrongly expressed, the same property being ascribed to the moon, whose nature is cold and damp, as to the sun.

Besides the instruction of the royal family, Alcuin had the organizing and superintendence of the court school, a kind of academy for the education of those who were intended to occupy important civil and ecclesiastical offices. He shared largely also in those measures proposed by Charlemagne for the improvement of the empire, which involved the establishment of higher class schools, in connexion with every cathedral church and monastery, and subsequently of schools expressly for the lowest members of society. Ordinances enjoining these provisions were issued, and to some



extent carried into effect. However imperfectly executed, and scanty the fruit, the design alone is sufficient to entitle its author to honourable mention on the page of history.

In the midst of these engagements, Alcuin had not forgotten that he was the child of England. Attached to a retired life, and free from worldly ambition, he became anxious to escape from a scene of publicity, and return to the leisure for private studies he had enjoyed at York. "The Searcher of my heart is witness," he could conscientiously write, "that it was not for lust of gold that I came to France, or continued there, but for the necessities of the church." Accordingly, having trained a number of agents competent to discharge the duties which had devolved upon him, he applied for permission to revisit his native country. But his services were too valuable to be readily dispensed with, while he had secured the strong personal attachment of Charlemagne. Hence, though assenting with reluctance to his departure, his return, if desired, was more than implied. "My lord king," said he, "I will not refuse thy wish if I can fulfil it without violating the commands of the church. Although I possess no small inheritance in my own country, I will willingly resign it, and in poverty serve thee, and remain with thee. Let it be thy care to obtain the permission of my king and my bishop." Even while consenting to lose him for a time, his services were retained in the character of a

diplomatist, to compose some differences between Charlemagne and the Mercian king Offa.

It was in the year 790 that Alcuin beheld once more his native land. He returned to mourn over the treachery and violence of princes and nobles, and to find Northumbria distracted by those political revolutions which preclude social security. Pleasant thoughts of peaceful avocations at York were speedily dispelled, and pressing letters of recall coming from France, he quitted England in 792 to resume his former station. But his learning as a theologian, and skill as a controvertist, were now chiefly in requisition to refute an Arian opinion which had been gradually gaining ground, to the effect that Christ was only the adopted Son of God, and throw the weight of his influence in the scale against image-worship, which the papacy had sanctioned, and which Charlemagne was determined to resist. These are topics which can only be suitably discussed in an ecclesiastical history, or in a detailed life of Alcuin. It will be sufficient here to remark, that previous to leaving England he produced a treatise against the worship of images, as contrary to the doctrines of Scripture; procured its condemnation in a national synod; wrote subsequently against the Adoptionists; was specially commissioned by the king to the council of Frankfort in 794, when both heresies were condemned; and was certainly the chief, if not the sole author of the Carovingian Papers, or Caroline Books, a formal representa-

tion of the opinions of Charlemagne upon image-worship, declaring it to be a custom of profligate heathenism.

Soon after his return to France, the clouds which gathered in deep blackness over his native Northumbria, the calamities, and, alas! the crimes of his countrymen, had painfully exercised the mind of Alcuin. In 793, the Danes appeared on the coast, and landing on Lindisfarne, they plundered the church and monastery. Some of the monks they slaughtered, and others they carried off as slaves; some they cast into the sea, and sent away others naked and houseless. Returning the year following, they pillaged the monastery of Wearmouth, but now met with a check. The inhabitants slew one of their leaders; their ships were wrecked by a tempest in the mouth of the Wear; and those of the crews that escaped a watery grave, only gained the shore to perish by the swords of the natives. The massacre of the monks excited grief and consternation through the whole kingdom, and Europe heard the story with dismay and horror. Alcuin frequently refers to it in his letters. Thus, to the Northumbrian king, Ethelred, he says, alluding to an unexplained event, which, in harmony with popular opinion, he deemed portentous: "Behold the church of St. Cuthbert is sprinkled with the blood of God's priests, despoiled of all its ornaments, and the holiest spot in Britain given up to pagan nations to be plundered; and where,

after the departure of St. Paulinus from York, the Christian religion first took its rise in our own nation, there misery and calamity took their rise also. What portends that shower of blood which, in the time of Lent, in the city of York, the capital of the whole kingdom, in the church of St. Peter, the chief of the apostles, we saw tremendously falling on the northern side of the building from the summit of the roof, though the weather was fair? \* Must not blood be expected to come upon the land from the northern regions? "

The melancholy fate of Lindisfarne supplied Alcuin with the subject of one of his best poems, "Upon the Mutability of Human Affairs," in which there are some pleasing passages :—

" How transient all that bears created form !  
Revolving seasons endless changes show ;  
Fair shines to-day, to-morrow howls the storm ;  
One smile of fortune cannot shield from woe.

Soon do we see our sweetest joys decay,  
Blighted by fate, inconstant as the main ;  
The gloom of night succeeds the brightest day,  
The buds of spring lie strewed on winter's plain.

The starry roof is gemmed with holy light,  
E'vanishing when rain-fraught vapours roll ;  
The blaze of noon fades instant from the sight,  
When southern storms convulse the trembling pole.

\* What the occurrence was cannot be known. It might have been a very simple one, distorted by an excited imagination. What are vulgarly called showers of blood have frequently been reported. Such appearances may be due to microscopic animal or vegetable forms of a reddish hue, or to rain impregnated with some inorganic colouring matter in the atmosphere.

The loftiest rocks most tempt the lightning's flash,  
The highest branches most attract the flame;  
More swift, more frequent, fate's o'erwhelming crash  
Descends on those most consecrate to fame."

But Alcuin knew well that "unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness," and he proceeds to relieve his sombre picture of human affairs by the verities of religion:—

"What, though I mark vice flourishing on high,  
Thy judgments, Lord, I seek not to explore;  
For other life's reserved beyond the sky,  
Where peace resides, and battles cease to roar.

As gold by fire refined more brightly beams,  
So shine the just, by Satan's arts assailed;  
Hence soars the soul, in purer, holier dreams,  
To realms of glory from our vision veiled."

SLEE.

The ravages of the northern pirates, and their formidable attitude towards England, were not its gravest calamities in the esteem of Alcuin. He knew that internal disunion, princes jealous and ambitious, factious nobles, and the prevalence of degenerate manners, are far more endangering to a state than external enemies. History supplied him with an example in the case of the Britons, to which he alludes in a letter to archbishop Athelhard: "I speak this on account of the scourge which has lately fallen on that part of our island which has been inhabited by our forefathers for nearly three hundred and forty years. It is recorded in the writings of Gildas, the wisest of the Britons, that those very Britons ruined their country through the avarice and rapine of their princes,

the inequity and injustice of their judges, their bishops' neglect of preaching, the luxury and abandoned manners of the people. Let us be cautious that such vices become not prevalent in our times, in order that the Divine favour may preserve our country to us, in that happy prosperity for the future which it has hitherto in its most merciful kindness vouchsafed us." There was ample reason for this warning in the state of the Northumbrian kingdom, where, notwithstanding the dangers to be feared from the terrible Danes, private feuds and party dissensions prostrated the power of the commonwealth, and led to the perpetration of the greatest social enormities.

Upon quitting the land of his fathers, Alcuin had no idea of finally separating from it. In the hope of contributing by his personal influence to check the disunion of his countrymen, he was contemplating a return, charged at the same time with a political mission from Charlemagne to Offa, when the murder of Ethelred, the Northumbrian king, in 796, arrested the project. In a letter to the Mercian monarch, he states: "I was prepared to come to you with the presents of king Charles, and to return to my country, but it seemed more advisable to me, for the peace of my nation, to remain abroad, not knowing what I could have done among those persons with whom no one can be secure or able to proceed in any laudable pursuit. Behold every holy place is laid desolate by pagans, the altars are polluted by perjury,

the monasteries dishonoured by adultery, the earth itself stained with the blood of rulers and of princes." Again, to the same person, he writes: "Your esteemed kindness is to understand that my lord, king Charles, often speaks to me of you with affection and sincerity, and in him you have the firmest friend. He therefore sends becoming presents to your love, and to the several sees of your kingdom. In like manner he had appointed presents for king Ethelred, and for the sees of his bishops; but, oh! dreadful to think, at the very moment of dispatching these gifts and letters, there came a sorrowful account, by the ambassadors who returned out of Scotland through your country, of the faithlessness of the people and the death of the king. So that Charles, withholding his liberal gifts, is so highly incensed against that nation as to call it perfidious and perverse, and the murderer of its sovereigns, esteeming it worse than pagan; and had I not interceded he would have already deprived them of every advantage within his reach, and have done them all the injury in his power." From this time Alcuin seems to have despaired of his country, resolving to remain abroad; and many laymen of rank and ecclesiastics withdrew in alarm or disgust from the realm. The vacancy which occurred in the see of York at this period, and his certain election to fill it, could not shake his purpose. He simply sent advices about the choice of a successor, and with the utmost satisfaction heard of the appointment of

Eanbald II., one of his own former pupils, to whom he addressed a congratulatory letter : "Praise and glory be to God, who hath preserved my days in full prosperity, that I should rejoice in the exaltation of my dearest son, who laboured in my stead in the church where I had been brought up and educated, and presided over the treasures of wisdom to which my beloved master, archbishop Egbert, left me heir."

The public avocations and political concerns incident to a residence at court were not congenial to the mind of Alcuin, and we may believe that a sense of duty alone had induced him to bear their burden. The lines addressed to his cell at York, in the *Elegy on the Destruction of Lindisfarne*, sufficiently proclaim his love of studious solitude :—

"Beloved cell, retirement's sweet abode,  
Farewell, a last farewell, thy poet bids thee.  
Beloved cell, by smiling woods embraced,  
Whose branches, shaken by the genial breeze,  
To meditation oft my mind disposed.  
Around thee too their health-reviving herbs  
In verdure gay the fertile meadows spread ;  
And murmuring near, by flowery banks confined,  
Through fragrant meads the crystal streamlets glide,  
Wherein his nets the joyful fisher casts.  
And fragrant with the apple-bending bough,  
With rose and lily joined, thy gardens smile ;  
While jubilant, along thy verdant glades  
At dawn his melody each songster pours,  
And to his God attunes the notes of praise.  
Yet sweeter far the sounds which thou hast heard,  
When to my infant mind by Christian sage  
The books of holy wisdom were explained.  
Still sweeter those which silent nature heard,  
When grateful songs to heaven's great King arose.  
Beloved cell, in mournful strains, alas !  
And flowing tears, I leave thine ivy'd roof.



No more thy silence shall the muses break;  
No more beneath thy classic shade recline  
Famed Horace, or the greater sire of song.\*  
No more when strangers' feet these precincts tread,  
Thy solitudes with youthful music ring."—DUNHAM.

Applying to Charlemagne for permission to retire from court and become an inmate in the monastery of Fulda, his wishes were acceded to on the former point; but the abbacy of Tours falling vacant, he was appointed to it, as worthy of the highest ecclesiastical dignities of the empire.

Alcuin's life, from his settlement at Tours in 796 to his death, had little relation to England, and may be rapidly passed over. He restored the discipline of the monastery which his predecessor had neglected; established a school, of which he took the active superintendence; taught the monks to substitute the pen for the implements of husbandry, and to regard the transcription of books as a nobler occupation than cultivating their vines; and despatched the commission to York for the purpose of having copies made of the volumes in the library which were wanting in France, of which mention has been made. Writing to the king on this last occasion, he says: "The employments of your Alcuinus in his retreat are suited to his humble sphere; but they are neither inglorious nor unprofitable. I spend my time in the halls of St. Martin, in teaching some of the noble youths under my care the intricacies of grammar, and inspiring them with a taste

\* Virgil or Homer.

for the learning of the ancients ; in describing to others the order and revolutions of those shining orbs which adorn the azure vault of heaven ; and in explaining to others the mysteries of Divine wisdom which are contained in the Holy Scriptures ; suiting my instructions to the views and capacities of my scholars, that I may train up many to be useful to the church of God, and an ornament to your kingdom." Then follows the application for the York commission, previously quoted, and he proceeds : "I need not put you in mind, that in every page of the Sacred Scriptures we are admonished to learn wisdom, for there is nothing which tends more to the attainment of a happy life, nothing more delightful in practice, nothing more efficacious in resisting vice, nothing more commendable in an exalted station, and, according to the declarations of philosophy, nothing more requisite in governing a people—than the ornament of wisdom, the praise of learning, and the influence of education. Hence, the wise Solomon exclaims, 'Wisdom is better than rubies ; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it. She it is who exalteth the humble and abaseth the proud. By her kings reign. Blessed are they who keep her ways and watch daily at her gates,' Prov. viii. 11, 15, 32, 34. Exhort then, my lord king, the youth in the palace of your highness, to learn with all diligence, and to strive daily to acquire wisdom, that they may make such progress in the bloom of their youth

as will bring honour upon their old age, and finally, by wisdom, obtain eternal blessedness. I also, according to the measure of my poor ability, will not cease to scatter in this soil the seed of wisdom amongst your servants, remembering the exhortation, 'In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether this or that shall prosper, or whether they both shall prosper,' which were still better, Eccles. xi. 6. To do this hath been the most delightful employment of my whole life. In my youthful years I sowed the seeds of learning in the flourishing seminaries of my native soil of Britain, and in my old age I am doing the same in France; praying to God that they may spring up and flourish in both countries. I know also, O prince, beloved of God, and praised by all good men, that you exert all your influence in promoting the interests of learning and religion; more noble in your actions than in your royal birth. May the Lord Jesus Christ preserve and prosper you in all your great designs, and at length bring you to the enjoyment of celestial glory!"

Astronomy, mentioned among the subjects of study at Tours, largely occupied the attention of the teacher and his royal master during the whole period of their acquaintance. Alcuin was required to calculate the lunar and solar year, with a view to the accurate measurement of time and the formation of a fixed calendar. He proposed a new nomenclature for the

months, borrowing some of the names from his native country, and inventing others. January he called Winter-month ; February, Horning-month ; March, Spring-month ; April, Easter-month ; May, Pleasure-month ; June, Fallow-month ; July, Hay-month ; August, Harvest-month ; September, Meadow-month ; October, Wind-month ; November, Autumn-month ; December, Holy-month. A new calculation of the year having arisen, namely, from the autumnal equinox, when the days shorten and the nights lengthen, Alcuin pleaded for the winter solstice being most appropriate, as coinciding with the commemoration of the birth of Christ, besides being the era of lengthening days and diminishing nights : "Darkness," he observes, "might be very suitable to Egyptians ; but he rejoiced that he had escaped from it, with Moses, to live and to abide in the precious land of light ; and that on no account would he, nor should the king either, return to Egyptian darkness." Several chronicles report it as a phenomenon, that the planet Mars was invisible from July, 798, to the same month in the following year. The missing orb, quietly pursuing its appointed orbit beneath the horizon, occasioned much sensation. Charlemagne, who had vainly searched the heavens for it, wrote for information to Alcuin upon the subject, who replied, "However, what has now happened to the planet Mars above, the same thing is frequently observed in these parts with respect to all the five planets, namely, that

they remain longer under the horizon than is stated in the books of the ancients, which are our guides. And perhaps the rising and setting of the stars, as observed by us who dwell in these northern parts, vary from the observations of those who live in the eastern and southern parts of the world, where chiefly flourished the 'masters,' who set forth for us the laws and courses of the heaven and of the planets. For many things are changed, as your own wisdom knows perfectly well, by diversity of place." It is certain from this passage, that Alcuin had made careful astronomical observations, and that if he did not grasp the idea of the globular form of the earth, he was alive to the incongruities which subsisted between celestial phenomena and its representation as a plane.

After his retirement from the court, Alcuin did not again mingle with it, except at those intervals when Charlemagne visited him. He was formally invited to exchange for a time the smoky roofs of Tours for the golden palaces of Rome, when his master went there, in the year 800, and was crowned emperor of the west, but he excused himself upon the plea of age and infirmity: "I do not believe that my frail body, exhausted as it is by daily pains, could support the journey; I should be glad were it otherwise. Why constrain me to struggle anew, to sweat under the weight of armour, when my infirmities do not permit me to rise without difficulty from the ground? Suffer me, I beseech you, to end my course in peace near

the shrine of St. Martin; I feel that all the energy and erect bearing of my body daily disappears, and that in this world I shall have them no more. For some time past I have longed to behold the face of your glory; but my growing infirmities compel me to renounce the hope." A painful dispute with his master upon a question of ecclesiastical privilege, in which he was clearly in the wrong, occurred soon afterwards, which embittered the close of his life, though it did not interrupt the friendly feeling which had subsisted between them. Alcuin died at Tours, May 19th, 804, and was buried in the church of St. Martin. Over his remains an epitaph, composed by himself, was inscribed upon a plate of copper, containing a warning addressed to the passer-by, which, variously expressed, now meets him on many a tombstone:—

"Quod nunc es, fueram, famosus in orbe viator,  
Et quod nunc ego sum, tuque futurus eris."

"What now thou art, I was—well-known to fame;  
What now I am, thou soon shalt be."

Its closing lines, in accordance with the prevalent error of the period, present the traveller with a prayer to offer up for the deceased. Under the epitaph the monks placed the following inscription: "*Hic requiescit beatæ memoriæ Domnus Alchurinus abbas, qui obiit in pace xiv Kalendas Junias. Quando legeretis, o Vos omnes, orate pro eo et dicite: Requiem æternam donet ei Dominus.*—Here rest the blessed remains of abbot Alcuin. He died in

peace fourteen days before the kalends of June. All ye who read this pray for him, and say, May the Lord grant him everlasting rest."

The tender care of Alcuin for his pupils is manifest from his letters. It forms one of the most pleasing traits of his character; and it is only just to his memory to say, that in the main, he taught them in his life what he enjoined upon them by precept. At the same time, the favour of a powerful monarch, the influence which he acquired in the Carlovingian empire, and the great deference paid to his opinions—circumstances so trying to human nature—were not without an unfavourable effect upon him. It appeared in the shape of "the pride that apes humility;" in the needless introduction of lowly representations of himself to those who were known to acknowledge his pre-eminence; and in some pedagogic arts, which aggrandized the idea of their master's intellectual capability in the esteem of his pupils, plainly intended to have that effect, and dictated by personal vanity. Yet few individuals have passed more unscathed through the ordeal which command over the means of self-indulgence, and the ordinary objects of worldly ambition, offer to our fallen nature, for, had he been so inclined, there was nothing but the good sense of Charlemagne to hinder his becoming the Wolsey of his time. But it redounds to the honour of both, that their prime object in public life was the constitution of a government in western Europe, resting its

claims for support and permanence, not upon the soldiery who had won it, but upon the rescue from barbarism, ignorance, and immorality, of the subjects it comprised. By a theological opponent, indeed, Alcuin was reproached for his riches, for ecclesiastical benefices, and numerous vassals ; but the reproach was unjust. His benefices were forced upon him by the king, because of the dearth of individuals to hold them creditably ; establishing regular discipline, disposing of the surplus revenues in alms to the poor, and furnishing the means of instruction to the vassals in connexion with them, instead of appropriating church property to purposes of selfishness or sensuality. Alcuin repeatedly wished to resign his appointments, but was not allowed, in order that these objects might be secured, only obtaining permission to have the assistance of his pupils in their administration. He truly remarked, in answer to the charge brought against him : “ The possession of riches is vicious only from the attachment of the heart : it is one thing to possess the world, and another to be possessed by the world : some possess riches, though perfectly disengaged from them in their hearts ; others, though they enjoy none, yet love and covet them.” He did not in his verse admonish others to a line of conduct neglected by himself :—

“ Mortal ! the casualties of death remember.  
If wealth alone we seek, we are but cattle.  
Know, all the various joys which charm below,  
Like a light-flying shade will soon depart.



Beware, lest in the hour of careless mirth  
The final whirlwind shake thee into ruin.  
Go, feed the hungry, and the naked clothe—  
Such deeds will bless thee in the grave we loathe.”

The writings of Alcuin, though very voluminous, are singly of no great extent. His poetry is often nothing but the dullest prose, relieved at intervals with passages which aspire to elegance and beauty. His prose consists of commentaries on the sacred writings, marked with the fault derived from antiquity, that of mystical interpretation, sometimes strikingly ingenious, anon pleasingly spiritual, and again simply childish; dogmatic treatises; liturgical works; a few biographies; tracts for elementary instruction; and numerous letters; but some of his writings have perished, while probably many letters, at present unknown, may exist in the libraries of the continent. In addition to the extracts made from his correspondence, the following advices to Athelhard, archbishop of Canterbury, deserve introduction for their Scriptural and healthy tone. The epistle is illustrative of the writer's fondness for antithesis, in which he is often highly impressive and happy:—

“Think of thy renowned predecessors, the teachers and lights of all Britain. Never forget that thy mouth should be the trumpet of God, thy tongue the herald of salvation to all men. Be a faithful shepherd, not a hireling; a ruler, not a subverter; a light, not darkness; a fortress defended by firm trust, not a house built on sand; a glorious warrior of Christ,

not a vile apostate ; a preaching, not a flattering priest. It is better to fear God than man ; to please him rather than the other. For what is a flatterer except a smooth-tongued enemy ? he destroys both himself and his hearer. Thou hast received the pastoral rod and the staff of brotherly affection—with that to rule, with this to console—to the end that the sorrowful may be comforted, the obstinate chastised by thee. The power of the judge is to kill, thine to make alive. Why fearest thou the sword of man, seeing that thou hast received from Christ the key of the kingdom ? Remember that he suffered for thee ; fear not to speak for him. Through love of thee he hung pierced with nails on the cross ; wilt thou, in thine elevated seat, be silent through the fear of man ? Not so, my brother, not so ! In the same manner as he hath loved thee love thou him. He who most labours will receive the greatest reward. If thou suffer persecution through preaching the word, what more desirable ? since God himself has said, ‘ Happy are they who suffer persecution for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ Be a comforter to the wretched, a father to the poor, to all affable. Let thine hand be liberal in alms-giving : promptly give, reluctantly receive. Remember that a priest is a messenger of the most high God, and that the holy law must issue from his mouth. Comfort the weak-hearted, invigorate the dejected, bring back the wanderers into the way of truth,

instruct the ignorant, monish the knowing ; and let your lives be the best teachers."

In the early part of his life, Alcuin was extremely partial to the productions of the classical writers ; but as age advanced, he devoted himself exclusively to the study of the Scriptures, discouraged attention to the literature of paganism in his pupils and others, and is said to have remonstrated with the archbishop of Treves, for poring over the *Æneid* instead of fixing his thoughts upon the four Evangelists. Some of his last years were employed in the revision of the Latin Bible, which, owing to the carelessness of transcribers, had become exceedingly corrupt. To restore the text to a state of purity, he examined and collated a number of valuable manuscripts, and his work became the authorized edition of the Scriptures read in the churches. Some copies of this revision are extant.

## CHAPTER V.

## ALFRED AND HIS FRIENDS.

THOUGH the life of ALFRED THE GREAT forms the subject of one of the Monthly Volumes, yet, as the most illustrious, if not the most accomplished of his race, whose patriotism, political wisdom, literary acquirements, and general merits, a thousand years have only rendered more conspicuous, it is impossible to omit his name in an account of Eminent Anglo-Saxons. But the work in question renders it unnecessary to do more than allude to his personal adventures and military career, dwelling chiefly in these pages upon his services to the cause of civilization as most in harmony with their design. From the time of Alcuin's final departure from the shores of England to Alfred's accession to the throne of his ancestors, there is an interval of nearly eighty years. During the former part of that period the Wessex kingdom rose to predominance among the Saxon states ; during the latter part it trembled for existence, owing to the encroachments of the Danes, and was only saved from impending ruin by the opportune appearance of Alfred.

He was the fourth and youngest son of Ethelwolf by his first wife, Osberga, both descendants of the royal house of Cerdic; and was born in the year 849, at Waneting, or Wantage, in Berkshire, where the Wessex kings had a royal residence, on the supposed site of a Roman station. Destined by the injudicious fondness of his father to succeed him, to the exclusion of his elder brothers, he was sent to Rome with a suitable retinue when but five years of age, and consecrated by the pope the future king of the West Saxons. In his seventh year, he again performed the same journey, this time accompanied by Ethelwolf himself. But the plan of parental partiality was frustrated. His three brothers, Ethelbald, Ethelbert, and Ethelred, successively occupied the throne before him, and lost it by natural death. His only sister, Ethelswitha, after becoming queen of Mercia, followed her husband into voluntary exile, hopeless of contending with the Danes, and died at Ticino, in Italy.

It is stated that Alfred attained the age of twelve before he learned to read. There is nothing surprising in this fact, and it argues no parental neglect, as commonly supposed, considering the ideas of the time. A knowledge of books was exclusively taught to those who were intended to be professionally devoted to the church. To be able to read and write was not deemed an accomplishment necessary for princes, nobles, and secular men. Yet, while these elements of scholarship were neglected,

oral instruction might be given, and the memory be stored with various branches of useful learning. That this was done in the case of Alfred, may be inferred from the elevated station contemplated for him by his father, and from the fact that he had Swithun, bishop of Winchester, for a preceptor, a prelate of great ability.\* We are told that, from his earliest infancy he had been delighted with the recitation of Saxon poems and songs, some of which he had retained in his memory. It was maternal solicitude that induced a knowledge of letters ; and, as in many other instances where great eminence has been attained, gave the first impulse towards it. Captivated by the illuminations which adorned a manuscript of Saxon poetry, he eagerly listened to the offer of Osberga to bestow the volume upon whichever of the sons should first acquire the ability to read it. Taking the book out of her hand, and repairing to his preceptor, Alfred achieved the task which his brothers declined, and thus entered the temple of learning, in which he was to occupy a place so distinguished in maturer years.

There is no reason to suppose that Alfred derived much advantage, at least for some years, from the invaluable art he had acquired. The glory of his manhood has been allowed to reflect itself upon his youth, and adorn it with fictitious hues. But whatever indications of native strength of mind, and capacity for the great and

\* His name is familiar as the patron of rainy weather.

good were afforded, the studious cultivation of his powers, and steady application to honourable pursuits, were deferred to a later period. Athletic exercise, hunting, and hawking—the usual avocations of young princes and nobles in that age—engrossed his attention. Selwood Forest, the woods of Gloucestershire, Kent, and Sussex, witnessed his devotion to the chase; and only by expertness as a hunter and military proficiency was England's future enlightened ruler and intellectual teacher known at this era of his life. Thus he grew up, marrying, in 869, Elswitha, daughter of a Mercian earl, aiding his brother Ethelred in repeated conflicts with the Danes, and ascending the throne upon his death, in 871. Little capacity had been acquired by moral elevation and mental discipline, to occupy a high station with credit to himself and improvement to the people, however competent to serve them on the field of battle by valour and military skill.

On appearing prominently upon the stage of public life, Alfred was in his twenty-third year. He had immediately to struggle to maintain his position as the independent sovereign of Wessex. After seven years' experience of the duties and cares of government, Providence seemed to decide against him, for, in 878, we find him stripped of political power, and retreating as a fugitive to the wilds of Somersetshire, only a few faithful adherents being aware of the place of his seclusion. The oft-repeated and well-known

legend, of the remissness of the king in household duty, when hospitably sheltered as an unknown stranger in a cowherd's hut, refers to this dark period of his history. *Æthelingaeig*, or *Athelney*, the Isle of Princes, the scene of his retirement, has been made known to the modern world, not only by tradition, but by a golden enamelled ornament found there, now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. It bears his name, and the inscription, "*Ælfred het me hgewircan*," "*Ælfred commanded me to be wrought*." The misfortunes of the king were not undeserved by him. Such is the verdict of a contemporaneous biographer; an admission reluctantly made out of homage to truth; for Asser was inclined, by gratitude to his benefactor and courtiership to his sovereign, to err on the favourable side in his representations of Alfred. The facts of the case appear to be, that while guilty of sensual excesses, the king had reigned arbitrarily, and found himself at last in collision with disaffected subjects as well as foreign foes. This was the storm that laid him low—the cause of his compulsory exile. But if he sinned and suffered, he repented and reformed. Never was the adage, that "sweet are the uses of adversity," more remarkably exemplified than in the case of Alfred. He became a new man in *Athelney*. Though what passed in his mind has not been recorded, yet the subsequent change sufficiently proves, that he must have reflected upon the follies of his past conduct—have communed with his



own heart and with his God—forming those wise resolutions, and contemplating those beneficent plans, which, in humble dependence upon Divine aid, he afterwards so completely realized.

Patriotism was not extinguished in Wessex ; it had only faltered ; and soon recovering from the shock, the very misfortunes of the king gave it strength and prevalence. After secretly collecting the scattered forces of the kingdom, and silently watching the movements of the Danes, while waiting for a favourable opportunity to strike a decisive blow, Alfred at length left his retreat, gained the great battle of Ethandun, and in the course of a rapid campaign, the power of the savage marauders was so completely broken, that they consented to retire from Wessex, and accept a location in East Anglia. This was about Whitsuntide, in the year 878. Though not securely seated on the throne for some time afterwards, and though repeatedly harassed by piratical incursions of the bordering Danes, comparative tranquillity was enjoyed during the next fifteen years. Faithfully was the interval employed by the monarch, in removing the traces of desolation from the land, restoring the disorganized framework of society, and reducing to order the disturbed elements of his kingdom. The task was a gigantic one. The impetuous torrent of barbarian violence had swept away almost every form of law and religion ; ruined towns, desecrated churches, and wasted fields, proclaimed its destructive

fury; while a people relapsing into the barbarism from which they had but imperfectly emerged, as the consequence of sanguinary wars and subjection to the yoke of the Northmen, offered impediments, instead of lending assistance, to the reconstruction of the social fabric.

It illustrates the high principles to which Alfred had now surrendered his powerful mind and steadfast will, that in such circumstances, almost single-handed, he attempted the task of reform, in which any degree of success was impossible, unless "he scorned delights and lived laborious days." That he was fully equal to the emergency, history records. Purified from the sensual, elevated above the low, and rescued from the indolent, by the sanctified chastisement of God, his great capacities were speedily developed when permitted freely to expand, acquiring for him the distinction of being regarded by posterity as "the mirror of kings, and the hero of European civilization."

His attention was necessarily in the first instance directed to those material works which were needed for the security of the kingdom, and the social welfare of the people. Towns had to be rebuilt; roads and bridges to be repaired; and fortresses to be restored with additional strength. London, though not then ranking as a metropolis, was a place of importance; it had been reduced, by frequent conflicts within its walls and conflagrations, to an

uninhabitable pile of ruins, but under his auspices it rose from its ashes. Several other dismantled places were rebuilt, and again collected inhabitants within their walls. At the same time, buildings of brick were substituted for the old wooden erections; and the nobles were enjoined to build castles of the same durable material, to serve as residences, and as points of security in case of future invasions. The storm of Danish devastation had been especially directed against the ecclesiastical establishments, levelling to the ground those of Croyland, Medeshamstead, Ely, Coldingham, and Tynemouth. Besides aiding the old foundations, the king appears to have instituted new ones at Winchester, Malmsbury, and at Athelney, the scene of his retreat.\* In past encounters with the Danes, advantage had been reaped from meeting the bold navigators upon their own element. Alfred, therefore, conceived the idea of having a permanent fleet to guard the coast, prosecuted it with astonish-

\* The site of Athelney, on the east of the Parret, in Somersetshire, at the confluence of that river with the Tone, is now indicated by a pillar, bearing the following inscription:—"King Alfred the Great, in the year of our Lord 879 (878,) having been defeated by the Danes, fled for refuge to the forest of Athelney, where he lay concealed from his enemies for the space of a whole year (scarcely six months.) He soon after regained possession of his throne, and in grateful remembrance of the protection he had received under the favour of Heaven, erected a monastery on this spot, and endowed it with all the lands contained in the Isle of Athelney. To perpetuate the memorial of so remarkable an incident in the life of that illustrious prince, this edifice was founded by John Slade, Esq., of Maunsel House, the proprietor of Athelney Farm, and Lord of the Manor of North Petherton. A.D. 1801."

ing vigour, and became the founder of the naval power of England. He made improvements also in naval architecture, constructing his vessels upon what he deemed a better principle than those with which the northmen navigated the German Ocean. So rapidly did the fleet increase, that it considerably exceeded a hundred sail, and was stationed in small squadrons off exposed points of the shores.

To repress the lawlessness caused by the dissolution of the bonds of society in the late wars, and restore internal order, Alfred compiled a code of laws, derived first, from the Divine law and the canons of the church; secondly, from the "dooms," or statutes of Ethelbert of Kent, Offa of Mercia, and Ina of Wessex; and thirdly, from the traditionary usages of the people, which were binding in cases not provided for by any written enactment. His legislation does not differ in principle from that of his predecessors, but is distinguished by greater severity, considered necessary for the times, as the last penalty is sometimes substituted for pecuniary mulcts, and the fines attached to various offences by way of compensation are raised. In fact, it is not as a legislator that Alfred is entitled to praise. However conscious of defects in the principle of the laws, and it is difficult to conceive him insensible upon this point, he did not venture to innovate, lest posterity, as he tells us himself, should not approve of novel enactments, or, as we may suspect, lest the strong

prejudices of his subjects should be more than a match for his own authority. Notwithstanding the turbulence of the times, there was a chance of the old statute-book being enforced, when new propositions would have been stoutly resisted, and it was practical wisdom to be content with securing recognition of defective laws, rather than run the hazard of provoking a defiance of all authority.

But if Alfred left the theory of Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence in much the same state as he found it, he was unremittingly vigilant in endeavouring to render the executive impartial and effective, by restoring proper authority to the courts of justice, appointing competent judges, and vigorously punishing those whose sentences were swayed by private malice and bribes. The careful application of the laws promoted the security of life and property, which, though falling very far short of what is reported in ancient chronicles, might have laid some foundation for their highly exaggerated statements, to the effect, that the traveller who lost his purse on the highway would be certain to find it there untouched, and that golden bracelets might be hung up on a cross-road without tempting the cupidity of the passenger.

A country covered with smoking ruins, and a lawless people, were not the only evils to be dealt with. The effect of the Danish invasions had been nearly to banish literature from the land of Aldhelm, Bede, and Alcuin ; while many of the most eminent monastic houses, the

only places where knowledge could be acquired, had been ruthlessly destroyed, their inmates, who were the only instructors, had been mercilessly butchered, and the libraries consigned to the flames. As the consequence, Alfred states, that when he came to the throne, at which period his tutor, Swithun, one of the old race of learned ecclesiastics, had just died, there were very few south of the Humber, and none south of the Thames, capable of translating a Latin work. To arrest the progress of barbarism, and restore the literature of the kingdom, great efforts were made. The services of the few who could be found at home to represent the cause of letters were enlisted, while others were invited from abroad. They were appointed to honourable offices, aided the king in his endeavours to improve the condition of the people, and in the cultivation of his own mind. Among these individuals, Plegmund, Werferth, Denewulf, Asser, John, and Grimbald, are distinguished ; but the accounts of their personal history are very meagre.

PLEGMUND was a native of Mercia. Upon that district being overrun by the Danes, he consulted his personal safety by flight, withdrew to an obscure solitude in Cheshire, which received the name of Plegmundesham from him, and for some years he resided there as a hermit. Alfred called him from his retreat, and raised him to the highest ecclesiastical dignity in the realm. "890. This year," says the Saxon Chronicle, "Plegmund was chosen of God and

of all the people to be archbishop of Canterbury." The king himself mentions first in the list of his teachers, "Plegmund my archbishop." Hence William of Malmsbury calls him "king Alfred's master." He survived his patron; presided in a council held under Edward the Elder, when the two dioceses of Wessex were subdivided into five; and died, according to the Chronicle, in 923. That copy of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which is generally known as the Benet ms., because preserved in the Benet or Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, is sometimes called the Plegmund ms., from the supposition that he compiled the first part of it. "From internal evidence of an indirect nature," says Dr. Ingram, "there is great reason to presume that archbishop Plegmund transcribed or superintended this very copy of the Saxon annals." It is written in one and the same hand to the year in which he came to the see of Canterbury, and in hands equally ancient to the year of his death, after which it is continued in different hands to the end. The conjecture is further supported by the total omission of his own name, for the notices referred to of his coming to the archbishopric and of his death are interpolations of a later date, betrayed by the cast of the dialect and orthography.

WERFERTH, appointed bishop of Worcester, was likewise a Mercian, and survived to the following century. He translated into Anglo-Saxon, at the request of the king, the Dialogues of pope Gregory with his friend the deacon

Peter, containing legendary tales of miraculous events in the lives of particular individuals. The translation has never been printed, and there is only one copy known to exist, among the manuscripts of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Werferth is mentioned in Alfred's will. The king left him a hundred mancuses. The mancus might be equal in value to six shillings, or seven shillings and sixpence of our present currency.

DENEWULF, bishop of Winchester, is said to have made the acquaintance and won the respect of Alfred under romantic circumstances. They first met accidentally in Selwood forest, the former as a swineherd tending his swine in the woods, the latter as a refugee in the wilds of Athelney. Entering into conversation with him, the king was so struck with the native talent which a rustic demeanour could not conceal, that upon recovering his kingdom, he had the swineherd sought out, placed him under instruction, and finally made him one of his bishops, when fitted for the station. His name occurs in lists of the Winchester prelates. The Saxon Chronicle states : " 908. This year died Denewulf, who was bishop at Winchester."

" ASSER, my bishop," (*Assere minum biscope*,) as Alfred styles him, is mentioned as one of his teachers. This individual was probably a native of South Wales, and before invited by the king to settle in his dominions, he seems to have presided over the monastery, if not over the see of St. David's. He ultimately became



bishop of Sherborne, and enjoyed no common share of royal favour. Alfred bequeathed to him the same legacy as to Werferth. His name occurs as a witness to charters of Edward the Elder in 901, 903, 904, and his death is recorded under the year 910. Asser wrote the life of his patron, containing the general history of the period from his birth to the year 887, and personal narrations concerning the king and his family, which come down to the year 893, when he was in his forty-fifth year. The first portion, with the exception of a few explanatory remarks, is taken from the Saxon Chronicle; the second seems chiefly to be the result of the author's observation, and is the source of all that can be authentically known of the private life of Alfred. The reason why he terminates the narrative at the particular period mentioned, though he survived his master, does not appear.

"JOHN, my presbyter," (*Johanne minum mæsse-preost*,) was one of the foreigners whom Alfred invited to his court. He was a native of Old Saxony, and appears to have come over from the monastery of Corvie in France, becoming abbot of the new foundation at Athelney, where a number of French monks settled with him. According to Asser, two of the monks, provoked by jealousy and malice, plotted the assassination of their superior, as he knelt before the altar at midnight in the church, but though wounded, his cries brought assistance before they could accomplish their purpose.

John he celebrates as a man of energetic talent, learned in all kinds of literary science, and skilled in many other arts.

GRIMBALD, provost of St. Omers, was another of the learned foreigners who settled in England at the instance of the king, and had the superintendence of his newly founded monastery at Winchester. His learning in Holy Scripture, knowledge of ecclesiastical discipline, and skill in singing, are mentioned. He did not long survive his patron. The Saxon Chronicle has the record: "903. This year died Grimbold, the mass-priest, on the 8th before the Ides of July."

In the society of these and other individuals, Alfred greatly extended his own knowledge, and by their means promoted it among his subjects, while watching with a vigilant eye over the general interests of the realm. By their assistance, he acquired such a knowledge of Latin, as to be able to translate works from that language into his mother-tongue, thereby rendering them accessible to his unlearned countrymen. This became a favourite occupation, and the time spent in the engagement may be regarded, in the words of Lappenberg, as the "true holiday of his reign, the high festival of his life." His translations comprise, 1. The Historical Work of Orosius; 2. Boethius on the Consolation of Philosophy; 3. Pope Gregory's Pastoral; 4. Bede's Ecclesiastical History. An account of these productions may be briefly given.

1. Paulus Orosius,\* a Spanish presbyter, was born at Tarragona, and flourished in the early part of the fifth century, during the reign of Arcadius and Honorius. After passing over to Africa about the year 413, to which he was drawn by admiration of Augustine, he proceeded to Palestine, where he made the acquaintance of Jerome, who was then residing at Bethlehem. Returning from the east with the pretended remains of the proto-martyr Stephen, he settled in Africa, wrote the history which bears his name, and died there at an unknown date. The calamities of the period, interpreted to the disadvantage of Christianity by its enemies, originated the work. Rome having been captured by Alaric, and barbarian armies overrunning at their will Italy, Gaul, and Spain, it was evident that the nominal imperial government, which survived under sufferance, must soon yield to the surrounding and increasing pressure. The impending ruin of the empire was referred by the pagan part of the population to their Christian fellow-subjects, whose apostasy from the worship of the ancient deities, it was alleged, had provoked this expression of their wrath. Orosius wrote to refute the calumny, and dedicated his work to Augustine, who had suggested the performance. His history, in seven books against the pagans, *Historiarum adversus Paganos libri VII.*, is designed to show, that before the birth of Christ

\* The name, slightly altered into Orosio, is still common in Spain.

mankind were familiar with calamities of the gravest kind, from war, pestilence, earthquakes, volcanoes, and the fury of the elements, while, excepting one nation, they had no revelation of future happiness to console them under the disasters of the present state. He produced, therefore, a chronicle of events to this effect, coming down from the earliest ages to A.D. 417. But he had little competency for his task, was not sufficiently well read, carelessly compiles from a few Latin writers, and registers many absurd relations, as, for example, that of the tracks of Pharaoh's chariot-wheels remaining visible in the Red Sea.

Still, in the ninth century, the work of Orosius was a valuable document ; and Alfred, in translating it, supplied his countrymen with the best compendium of ancient history within his reach, containing geographical as well as historical information that was new to them. It had long been well-known to Anglo-Saxon scholars. Alcuin mentions it in his catalogue of the York library ; and Bede drew largely from it in his Ecclesiastical History. The conjecture is a probable one, that the subject of the work, the misfortunes incident to the human race, the very title which some copies bear, *Miseriis Antiquorum*, led the king strongly to sympathize with it, acquainted as he was with great vicissitudes and sorrows. Alfred rather paraphrases than translates, and improves upon his author in the way of elucidation and addition. Thus, where Orosius says

that Asia is surrounded on three sides by the ocean, Alfred adds the specification of the north, south, and east. His additions are not always accurate, and it would be wonderful if they had been. He makes the Tigris flow into the Red Sea. The most important addenda are a sketch of Germany, and the voyages of Wulfstan and Ohther, the former an original composition, the latter founded upon materials supplied by the adventurers. Ohther was a Norwegian, noble, driven from his native country by civil wars and disturbances. Of his circumstances and the land of his birth we have the following report :— \*

“ Ohthere said to his lord, king Ælfred, that he abode the northmost of all the Northmen. He declared that he abode on those lands northward against the west sea (Atlantic.) He said, though that land is very north thence, and is all waste, except in few places, the Finnas (Finns) dwell scattered about : they hunt in winter, and in summer they fish in the sea.

“ He was a very wealthy man in those possessions that be their wealth ; that is, in wild deer. He had then yet when he sought the king six hundred unbought tame deer : these deers they call hranas. There were six decoy hranas : they be very dear amid the Finnas, because they take the wild hranas with them, He was amid the first men in those lands, though he had not more than twenty horned

\* For an account of the voyage of Wulfstan and the sketch of Germany, see Monthly Volume xlv., *Life of Alfred the Great*, pp. 139—146.

cattle, and twenty sheep, and twenty swine ; and the little that he ploughed, he ploughed with horses ; but their wealth is most in those gafol (tribute) that the Finnas pay to them. These gafol be in deer skins, and in birds' feathers, and whales' bones, and in ship ropes, that he made of the whales' hides and of seals.

"He said, that Northmanna land was very long and very small (narrow?) ; all that his men might use for pasture or plough lay against the sea, and even this is in some places very rocky. Wild moors lay against the east, and along the inhabited lands. In these moors the Finnas dwell. The inhabited land is broadest eastward, but northward becomes continually smaller. Eastward it may be sixty miles broad, or a little broader, midway thirty or broader, and to the north, he said, where it was smallest, it might be three miles broad to the moors. The moors are in some places so broad that a man might be two weeks in passing over them. In some places, their breadth was such that a man might go over them in six days.

"Even with these lands, southward on the other half of the moors is Sweo-land ;\* to the lands northward, and even with the lands northward, is Cwenaland.† The Cwenas make

\* Sweden.

† The country between the head of the Gulf of Bothnia and the White Sea. In Spruner's Historico-Geographical Atlas, the district is called Quænland. The resemblance of the name to the Scandinavian word *quean*, which signifies a woman, originated the surmise in the Middle Ages that there was a country of Amazons in the north.

depredations, sometimes on the Northmen over the moors ; sometimes the Northmen on them : and there are many great fresh lakes over these moors, and the Cwenas carry their ships overland to the lakes, and thence plunder the Northmen ; they have ships very little and very light. Ohthere said, the shire was called Halgoland that he abode in. He declared that no man abode north of him."

Ohthere plainly belonged to the conquering tribe, the Goths, who had subdued the country, and compelled the Finns, the older inhabitants, to pay tribute. His description of Norway as long and narrow, having its only cultivable districts on the sea-coast, with wild moors eastward, places his credibility above suspicion. The manners of the north, we learn, were much the same a thousand years ago as they are at present. Ohthere's voyage is thus reported :—

"He said, that on some occasion he wished to find out how long that land stretched to the north, or whether any man abode to the north of those wastes. Then went he right north of those lands, leaving the waste land all the way on the starboard, and the wide sea on the larboard. Three days was he as far north as the whale hunters furthest go. Then went he yet right north as far as he might sail for three other days ; the land bent there right east, or the sea in on that land, he knew not whether ; but he knew that he there expected a west wind, or a little to the north. He sailed thence

east of the land, so as he might in four days sail. Then should he there abide a right north wind, because that land inclined right south, or the sea in on that land, he knew not whether.

“Then sailed he thence right south of the land, so as he might in five days sail. Then lay there a great river up in that land. Then returned they up from in that river, because they durst not sail forth by that river from hostility, for that land was all inhabited on the other side of the river, nor did he meet before any inhabited land, since he went from his own home; but to him all the way was waste land on the starboard, except the fishers, fowlers, hunters; and these were all Finnas; on his larboard there was a wide sea.

“The Beormas (Permians) had very well inhabited their land, and he durst not come there; but Terfinna land was all waste, except where the hunters, fishers, or the fowlers settled.

“The Beormas told him many accounts either of their own lands, or of the lands that were about them; but he knew not what was truth, because he did not see it himself. He thought the Finnas and the Beormas nearly spoke one language; he went thither, shaping his course rather to each of these lands for the horse whales (*hors hwælum*, walrus,) because they have very good bone in their teeth. He brought some of the teeth to the king; the hides are very good for ship ropes. These



whales are much less than the other whales, nor are they longer than seven ells long."

It is evident that Ohthere sailed round the North Cape of Europe into the White Sea, on the eastern side of which lay the country of the Permians, at present possessed by the Samoiedes. He appears also to have entered the mouth of the Dwina. Curiosity was not the only motive of the voyage, but principally the pursuit of the walrus, animals extremely valuable for their tusks, which made fine ivory, and for their strong and pliant skins.

In the "Principal Navigations, Voyages, etc., of the English Nation, 1599-1600," Hakluyt published a translation from the Anglo-Saxon of the "Voyages of Ochter, made to the east parts beyond Norway, reported by himself unto Alfred, the famous king of England, about the year 890:" following this occurs, "The Voyage of Ochter out of his countrey of Halgoland into the Sound of Denmarke, unto a part called Hetha, which seemeth to be Wismer or Rostoke;" and next succeeds, "Wolstan's Navigation within the east sea, (within the Sound of Denmarke,) from Hetha to Prussa, which is about Dantzic." The voyages were published at Copenhagen, by Bussæus, in the year 1733; by Langebeke, in 1770; and a few years afterwards, they appeared at Paris, in a French translation of Foster's History of Northern Discoveries. In 1773, a complete edition of Alfred's Orosius, with a translation, was first printed, under the auspices of Daines Barrington, using

a transcript of the principal manuscript of the work in the Cottonian Library, formerly made by Mrs. Elstob, who contemplated the publication.

The knowledge obtained by Alfred of the rest of the world was truly extraordinary, considering his era, means, and other occupations. It extended to India, whither an embassy was despatched with gifts to the supposed shrine of St. Thomas, on the coast of Malabar. Though this was in acquittance of a vow made when the Danes held possession of London, there can be little doubt that the information likely to be derived from intelligent travellers was not lost sight of. Two ecclesiastics, Sighehn, afterwards bishop of Sherborne, and Athelstan, safely accomplished the perilous enterprise, and brought back oriental products, gems, and perfumes, some of which were in existence in the time of William of Malmsbury. No narrative of this journey appears to have been written, as in the case of the northern voyages, or if written it has perished.

2. Boethius, the last eminent Roman who understood the language and cultivated the literature of Greece, flourished at the commencement of the sixth century. He acquired great distinction in his day, being of noble birth, ample means, which were liberally expended in supplying the wants of others, commanding abilities, and generally estimable character, while his position in history, which belongs equally to the ancient and to the

modern world, has given prominence to his name. Singularly happy in domestic life, he was as singularly unfortunate in political office. During his third consulate, in the year 522, a just administration of affairs exposed him to the enmity of those whose peculations were arrested by it; and upon a false charge contrived by these parties, he fell under the displeasure of Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths, by whose order he was imprisoned, and finally executed in 526. Boethius, when in confinement, deserted by the world, wrote the treatise on the "Consolation of Philosophy," (*De Consolatione Philosophicæ*), the work on which his fame chiefly rests. The prose is interspersed with poetry, almost entirely borrowed from Seneca. In an imaginary dialogue between Philosophy personified and the author, he endeavours to find comfort under his afflictions. There is a real and strong belief in Providence and the efficacy of prayer indicated, but no notice is taken of the sources of consolation so peculiarly distinctive of the Christian system. This has led to the surmise, that the theological works ascribed to Boethius are due to another person of the name, a very common one in that age; and that the writer was a heathen of the reformed Stoic school, whose character and views had gained elevation merely from the indirect influence of Christianity.

The Anglo-Saxon version of Boethius is considered by general consent to be the production of Alfred, who might be strongly interested

in the work, because of his own passage through the ordeal of severe adversity. It is an attempt to convey the meaning of the original rather than a translation of it. The king adopts a dissimilar arrangement, very freely paraphrases, omits many passages, and inserts largely records of his own reflections and feelings. The feminine *Philosophia* he Saxonizes by the masculine *Wisdom*. Sometimes he fails to catch the meaning of his author, when reasoning upon such high points as the Divine prescience and human liberty, and betrays his defective knowledge of Latin, though Asser is said to have rendered the construction easy to him. He commits also the error of making the consul really guilty of treason to Theodoric. Still the work was a highly important addition to the vernacular literature, and from Ethelwerd we may gather that it was widely known and relished, for he observes in his *Chronicle*, that "the sorrowful book of Boethius seemed not only to the learned, but even to those who heard it read, as it were brought to life again." The poetry in Boethius is translated into prose in the Bodleian ms.; but a manuscript in the Cottonian Library has a metrical version, the only copy in which it appears. Some ascribe both to Alfred, and suppose the prose translation first made, and the metrical version subsequently, when sufficient leisure could be commanded for the work. But there is reason to believe that the metrical version was supplied by another hand, at a later date. However this may be, we make

room for a spirited rendering, in modern English verse, of the Anglo-Saxon poetical version of Metre 25, the description of a tyrant:—

*Geher nu an spell  
Be thæm ofermodum, etc.*

“Hear now a spell of the proud overbearing  
Kings of the earth, when unrighteous in mind;  
Wondrously bright tho’ the weeds they are wearing,  
High tho’ the seats where their pomp is enshrined;  
Gold-clad and gemm’d, and with hundreds round-standing,  
Thanes and great earls, with their chain and their sword,  
All of them chieftains in battle commanding,  
Each in his rank doing suit to his lord;  
While in such splendour each rules like a savage,  
Everywhere threat’ning the people with strife.  
Lo, this lord heeds not, but leaves them to ravage  
Friends for their riches, and foes for their life.  
Ay, and himself like a hound that is maddened,  
Flies at and tears his poor people for sport,  
In his fierce mind too loftily gladdened  
With the proud power his chieftains support.

“But, from his robes if a man should unwind him,  
Stripp’d of such coverings kingly and gay,  
Drive all his following thanes from behind him,  
And let his glory be taken away;  
Then should ye see that he likens most truly  
Any of these who so slavishly throng  
Round him, with homage demurely and duly,  
Neither more right than the rest, nor more wrong.”

TUPPER.

Alfred’s Boethius was first published at Oxford by Mr. C. Rawlinson, in 1698; and again by Mr. Cardale, of Leicester, with an English translation, in 1829. The Anglo-Saxon version of the Metres of Boethius, with a translation, edited by Mr. Fox, appeared in 1835.

3. Gregory’s Pastoral, or Treatise on the Pastoral Office, (*Liber Pastoralis Curæ*,)—a title which Alfred translates by *Hirde-boc*, Herdsman’s Book—was rendered into the vernacular language by the king, with the assistance of

Plegmund, Asser, and John, as a help to the illiterate clergy. The preface, an original composition, in which he refers to the state of learning in England at the three periods of his early youth, his accession to the throne when the Danish desolations had extensively occurred, and at the date of the translation, renders the work peculiarly interesting.\* Copies of it are said to have been forwarded to each of the bishops, with their names inserted in the prefatory letter. Three of these copies are extant, addressed to Wulfsige of Sherborne, in the Public Library, Cambridge; to Werferth of Worcester, in the Bodleian Library; and to Plegmund of Canterbury, in the Cottonian collection. This work has not been printed.

4. Bede's great historical work, already amply characterized, rendered into Anglo-Saxon by Alfred, accomplished for his subjects in relation to the annals of their own country, what the translation of Orosius did with reference to the general history of the world. In this performance there is less freedom taken with the original, yet one omission occurs which has been deemed significant, that of the chapter relating to the synod at Whitby, as though the manner in which it terminated to the triumph of the Roman party provoked the king's indignation by its absurdity.†

Another work of Alfred's, still preserved, but not printed, consists of a translation of select

\* Life of Alfred, Monthly Volume xlvii., pp. 124—128.

† Lives of Eminent Anglo-Saxons, part i. p. 114.

extracts from the Confessions of Augustine. The loss of his Hand-book, in existence in the time of William of Malmsbury, is to be regretted, for though a compilation merely, we might have gathered illustrations of his own character from a record of the subjects in which he was interested. What are called "King Alfred's Proverbs, given at Shifford, A.D. 890," a collection of moral maxims in verse, addressed to his people and to his son, have no claim to be regarded as the king's production, but the performance of some later writer, founded upon sayings traditionally preserved and popularly ascribed to him.

In the establishment of a court school for the education of his own children, in conjunction with the young nobles ; in an artificial method of measuring time, by the combustion of a number of candles duly apportioned to each other—rude and cumbersome indeed, but yielding a more definite result than that obtained by popular observation of the sun by day and the stars by night ; and in the homely addition made to the household conveniences of his subjects, by introducing the horn lanterns known on the continent, or at least encouraging their use by his own example—the greatness of Alfred appears not less conspicuous than when we contemplate him writing the lettered page, fixing more exactly the old territorial divisions of the kingdom, asserting the supremacy of the laws, and providing for the utterance of right decisions in the courts of justice. It should not

be forgotten, that while these engagements were prosecuted, the king was subject to severe attacks of bodily suffering. In early years, he had been afflicted with a painful disease, from which, it is stated, he obtained relief on prayer to the Almighty in a church in Cornwall. But a new mysterious malady, we are told, seized him at his marriage festival, from which he had little respite during the rest of his days. Yet, as that was previous to his change of character, and as it occurred during the festivities of the occasion, we have reason to suspect that immoderation induced a return of the old complaint with aggravated symptoms. Allowing for exaggeration—and it is impossible to reconcile the statements, interpreted literally, of his physical ailments with the reports of his athletic exercises—we must still regard him as having no light amount of corporeal suffering to endure; and it increases surprise, and naturally prompts the question, How, in such inauspicious circumstances, he managed to accomplish so much? Lappenberg truly observes, that we obtain from Asser's representation of his master, an answer to the question such as Charlemagne or Benjamin Franklin would have given. The answer is amply satisfactory. A settled purpose, with its concomitants, the careful expenditure of time, the economic use of revenue, order, and feasible plans, yields astonishing results, in the face of heavy difficulties. In this respect the career of Alfred is highly instructive and encouraging. It shows



that energetic exertion, when directed to right objects, in spite of obstacles, when favoured by God's blessing, shall not be in vain.

Hostilities with the old enemies of the kingdom followed the peaceful pursuits and congenial occupations we have reviewed, terminating in the triumph of the king. But incessant harassing had told upon a frame sufficiently taxed by natural infirmity; and shortly after the close of the struggle, his sun went down while it was yet day. He died October 28th, 901, comparatively young, if his age is reckoned by the number of its years, for it had not completed fifty-three; but old, if his days are counted by the variety and importance of the undertakings accomplished in their course.

History has affectionately embalmed the memory of Alfred, and the whole civilized world reveres his name. As a scion of the Germanic race, the motto has often been used by the Germans when writing of the Anglo-Saxon king, with a natural pride, *Der Mann gehört uns an*—"The man is near of kin to us." But it is somewhat remarkable, that his own countrymen have hitherto possessed no complete edition of his works, though this is now in course of preparation, as the result of a late commemorative festival in honour of his birth. The cycle of a thousand years from the natal day of Alfred was completed in the course of the year 1849; and on that occasion a jubilee was held in his native town, announced as

follows: "To all good men and true of Wantage and its neighbourhood. A great and unprecedented honour is thrust upon you: on Thursday, the 25th of October, will be commemorated in his native town king Alfred's thousandth birthday. From all parts of England, your countrymen, together with some foreigners and American kinsmen, are expected to flock to this patriotic celebration; and you need not be reminded how kindly, nor how warmly, you will welcome the guests who seek out Wantage on so happy an occasion. King Alfred is known to all the world as, perhaps, the greatest man—certainly the best king—that ever lived; and in his institutions, character, and fame, is still, and ever will be immortal amongst us. Let us all now endeavour to do him and our country due honour on this thousandth anniversary: commencing, as we ought, by the solemn and grateful service of God, after these thousand years of mercies and prosperities; and thence proceeding, as we gladly may, to the cheerful festivities of our jubilee." Nearly twenty thousand persons assembled for the celebration in perfect harmony and order; and a jubilee edition of all the works of Alfred was determined upon, to appear some time in the year 1852, edited by the most competent Anglo-Saxon scholars.

It may be observed in conclusion, that the blood of Alfred survived the usurpation of the Danes, as well as the fatal conflict on the battlefield of Hastings; and that through the Stuart,

Tudor, and Plantagenet families, the present sovereign on the throne, Queen Victoria, is connected with Matilda, wife of Henry I., a princess of the ancient house of Cerdic, who founded the line of the West Saxon kings.

## CHAPTER VI.

## ELFRIC, THE GRAMMARIAN AND HOMILIST.

THERE are few examples of an individual so prominent in his day as ELFRIC, the great Anglo-Saxon homilist, bequeathing to posterity such a mass of writings, whose personal history is involved in so much obscurity. It is impossible, in fact, positively to identify him among the many in the same age who bore the same name, and with any certainty to trace his career. There is reason to believe that the Anglo-Norman prelates, in imposing the new Romish doctrines relating to transubstantiation, deliberately sought to bury in oblivion his memory and writings, contemplated, in fact, his literary and theological assassination, as having propagated different views concerning the eucharist. This is not an illiberal conjecture, for in a Latin epistle of Elfric on the doctrines of the church, now in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, that portion of it written against transubstantiation was so perfectly erased, that no letter or fragment of a letter remained. But a Saxon copy of the same epistle being found in the archives of Exeter

Cathedral, the whole sentence was restored. The commonness of the name has also contributed to confusion and perplexity. Mention is made of Elfric as priest, as abbot of Malmsbury, as abbot of St. Albans, abbot of Burgh, (Peterborough,) archbishop of York, and archbishop of Canterbury—all of which titles it would be absurd to suppose belonged to one individual. There were, at least, two prominent persons of the name, one of whom held the see of Canterbury from 995 to 1005, and the other that of York from 1023 to 1051. Some identify the homilist with the primate of all England, but the evidence most favours an identification with the York metropolitan. It is, however, of little comparative moment who Elfric was; and upon the more important point of *what* he was, we have ample information. To illustrate his theological sentiments, which, as sanctioned by the highest ecclesiastical authority in the realm, cease to be the opinions of an individual, will be the chief object of this chapter.

Neither the place nor the date of Elfric's birth can be ascertained. But the former was no doubt in the south of England; and as he was a scholar of Ethelwold, bishop of Winchester, who died in 984; as he sent his homilies to Sigeric, who held the archbishopric of Canterbury from 989 to 994, being then a presbyter—it is plain that we cannot assign a later date for his birth than the year 965. To the influence of his master, a zealous patron of

monastic principles, we may reasonably refer, in a great degree, the strong prejudices in favour of clerical celibacy which Elfric imbibed. To his views also upon this point a case of want of learning contributed, in the instance of one of the married clergy, which came under his notice in early life, when any impression which the mind receives is not easily eradicated. In the preface to one of his translations he states: "Once I knew that a certain mass-priest, who was my master at that time, had the Book of Genesis, and he could scarcely understand Latin;" and immediately after it is added, "the unlearned priests, if they know some little of the Latin books, they fancy soon they may be great scholars." This individual, he informs us, used to speak of Jacob and his four wives. The youth, passing from his care into the school of Ethelwold, who was one of the most accomplished men of his time, seems to have derived from the contrast an aversion to the whole class of secular priests, and those prepossessions in favour of monasticism which appear in his writings.

From Ethelwold's school at Winchester, Elfric may be clearly traced into Dorsetshire, where he regulated the affairs of an abbey at Cernel, or Cerne, then newly established. This was at the request of its founder, Ethelmer, earl of Cornwall, with whom and his son, the ealdorman Ethelward, terms of intimacy were established. He took this charge certainly not later than the year 989, when the feeble and

despicable Ethelred II. swayed the sceptre, and the Danes were about to descend in overpowering swarms upon the country. It was immediately upon his settlement at Cerne that Elfric commenced that career of voluminous authorship, which has invested his name with just distinction; nor should it be forgotten, that to his noble patrons, the ealdermen, we are indebted for his most important works, which were written at their suggestion. To attempt to trace his career in detail further would involve uninteresting discussions, ending in no certain result. It may suffice to observe, that an insuperable difficulty opposes the identification of the homilist with his namesake, the metropolitan of Canterbury, while his identification with Elfric, archbishop of York, involves an extended life of about eighty-five years, an age by no means implying a natural impossibility.

Elfric prepared his homilies in two sets, of forty each. The first series was written very soon after he went to Cerne, apparently in the year 990, at the request of earl Ethelmer. The second series was produced at the desire of Ethelward, towards the close of 991—the Danish invasion, to which reference is made, occurring in the interval between the two compositions. Both sets were sent to the archbishop Sigeric, and obtained his approval. It does not clearly appear that the writer was in priest's orders while actually engaged in this work, for he subscribes himself simply the scholar of Ethelwold to the first forty, *Elfricus Alumnus Ethelwoldi*;

and a humble servant of Christ to the second, *Elfricus, Humilis Servulus Christi*; but both sets, being authorized, were published, and apparently as the sermons of *Elfric, Priest*. They consist of discourses "to be recited in church during the year," for the edification of the common people, and are either practical applications of the Gospel for the day, or of the historical accounts of the saints and martyrs who figure in the festivals. While yielding undoubting credence to the legendary miracles with which their biographies abound, it must be remembered that the narrations referred to events either of remote regions or distant time, and came to the homilist sanctioned by the authority of venerated names; but so far was he from being deceived by reported wonders capable of personal investigation, that he distinctly affirms it as his own faith, that the age of miracles had ceased. "These wonders," he observes, "were needful at the beginning of Christianity, for by these signs were the heathen folk inclined to faith. The man who plants trees, or herbs, waters them so long until they have taken root; when they are grown he ceases from watering; so also the Almighty God, so long showed his miracles to the heathen folk, until they were believing; when faith had sprung up all over the world these miracles ceased." We mark unscriptural usages and papistical devices in the homilies, but to two important points of Romish doctrine they are decidedly opposed; while ample evidence is



supplied by them, that in England, in the tenth century, the great saving truths of the gospel had an able advocate.

The pious and learned Saxon speaks in the highest terms of the Scriptures, and strongly enforces the constant reading of them.

In his homily *On the Assumption*, he observes: "If we were to say many things respecting this festival, which are not read in the Sacred Scriptures, which were appointed by the inspiration of God, we should be like those heretics who write falsehoods from their own inventions or dreams. It is sufficient for the faithful to read and learn what is true; and yet how very few are there who diligently search the whole Bible, dictated by God, or published by the inspiration of his Spirit! Let everyone, therefore, whether of the clergy or laity, throw aside those heretical falsehoods, which lead the incautious to destruction; and let him read or hear that sacred doctrine, which, if attended to, will guide us to the kingdom of heaven."

In another homily, *On Reading the Scriptures*, he thus expresses his sentiments: "Whoever would be one with God must often pray, and often read the Holy Scriptures. For when we pray we speak to God; and when we read the Bible, God speaks to us. The reading of the Scriptures produces a twofold advantage to the reader. It renders him wiser, by reforming his mind; and also leads him from the vanities of the world to the love of God. The reading of

the Scriptures is truly an honourable employment, and greatly conduces to the purity of the soul. For as the body is nourished by natural food, so the inward man, that is, the soul, is nourished by the Divine sayings, according to the words of the psalmist, 'How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.' Happy is he, then, who reads the Scriptures, if he convert the words into actions. The whole of the Scriptures are written for our salvation, and by them we obtain the knowledge of the truth."

Elfric carefully endeavoured to eradicate from the minds of the people the lingering superstitious practices and notions derived from their heathen ancestors. Thus, in the *Homily for the Circumcision*, he says:—

"Now foolish men practise manifold divinations on this day, with great error, after heathen custom, against their Christianity; as if they could prolong their life or their health, while they provoke their Almighty Creator. Many are also possessed with such great error, that they regulate their journeying by the moon, and their acts according to days, and will not undertake anything on Monday, because of the beginning of the week; though Monday is not the first day in the week, but is the second. Sunday is the first in *creation*, in order, and in dignity. Some foolish men also say, that there are some kinds of animals which one should not bless; and say that they decline by blessing, and by cursing thrive, and so enjoy God's

grace to their injury, without blessing, [and are benefited] with the devil's malediction. Every blessing is of God, and curse of the devil. God created all creatures, and the devil can create no creatures; for he is an inciter to evil, and worker of falsehood, author of sins, and deceiver of souls."

Judicial astrology comes in for a rebuke, in a very interesting passage in the *Homily on the Epiphany*:—

"We are also to know, that there were some heretics who said, that every man is born according to the position of the stars, and that by their course his destiny befalls him; and advanced in support of their error, that a new star sprang up when the Lord was corporally born, and said that that star was his destiny. Let this error depart from believing hearts, that there is any destiny excepting the Almighty Creator, who provides for every man life by *His* [Christ's] *merits*. Man is not created for the stars, but the stars are created as a light by night for men. When the star glided, and led the astrologers, and pointed out to them the Child's inn, it showed that it was Christ's creature, and rightly ministered to its Creator: but it was not his destiny. Again, we beseech that no believing man defile his faith with this error. Verily, Rebecca, Isaac's wife, brought forth twins at one time, so that Jacob held his elder brother Esau by the foot at his birth; yet they were not alike in character, nor in the actions of their life. Holy Writ,

indeed, says that God loved Jacob and hated Esau ; not by destiny, but for various acts. It happens very often that the queen and the slave bring forth at one time, and yet the prince, through his birth, grows up for the lofty throne, and the son of the slave continues all his life in servitude."

He was not less careful, with reference to the recognised ceremonies of the church, to instruct the people to look through the symbol to the object intimated. Thus, on the festival of the Purification, or Candlemas Day, it was the custom of the congregations to go to church with lighted tapers in their hands, because—

"On this day was Christ, the true Light, borne to the temple, who redeemed us from darkness, and bringeth us to the eternal Light."

So, in relation to the practice of turning to the east in prayer, we are told, that—

"From thence the heaven rises: not as though His dwelling be particularly in the east part, and that he forsakes the west, or other parts, who is everywhere present, not through the space of the place, but by the presence of his Majesty. But when we turn our face to the east part, where the heaven rises, which rises over all bodily things, then should our mind be thereby admonished that it turn to the highest and first Nature—that is, God."

Again, on Palm Sunday, the usage was universal of attending service with some branch in the hand, representing a palm-branch, because, he states—

"We imitate the faithful of the Jewish people with this deed, for they bore palm-twigs with hymns before Jesus. Now we should hold our palm until the singer begins the offering song, and then offer to God the palm for its betokening. Palm betokens victory. Victorious was Christ when he overcame the great devil, and rescued us; and we should also be victorious through God's might, so that we overcome our evil practices, and all sins, and the devil, and adorn ourselves with good works, and at the end of our life deliver the palm to God, that is, our victory, and thank him fervently, that we, through his succour, have overcome the devil, so that he could not deceive us."

The typical method of interpretation, early adopted and long continued in the church, characterizes the manner of the homilist, but it is handled with care and judgment. If the ingenious allegorist appears, the Christian teacher is no less prominent, treating the inspired narrative as the suggestive theme of some doctrinal or practical instruction. As an example, a quotation may be made from the discourse for Quinquagesima Sunday, which shows that our forefathers, in the tenth century, were not without an evangelical ministry. The subject is our Lord's announcement of his passion to his disciples, and the subsequent healing of blind Bartimeus, (Luke xviii. 31,) etc.

"The beginning of this Gospel touched our Saviour's passion, though he did not suffer at

this time ; but he would, from afar and long before, make known his passion to his disciples, that they might not be too much terrified by his passion, when the time came that he would suffer. Their minds were terrified by Christ's saying ; but he again cheered them by the words which he spake, ' I will arise from death on the third day.' He would then strengthen and confirm their faith with miracles. And they came then to the place where the blind man sat by the way ; and Christ healed him before the sight of all the multitude, to the end that with that miracle he might bring them to belief. But the miracles which Christ wrought manifested one thing by power, and another thing they betokened by mystery. He wrought those miracles, indeed, through Divine power, and with those miracles confirmed the people's faith ; but yet there was another hidden thing in those miracles in a spiritual sense. The one blind man betokened all mankind, who were blinded through Adam's sin, and thrust from the joy of paradise, and brought to this life, which is compared to a prison. Now we are shut out from the heavenly light, and we may not, in this life, enjoy the light eternal ; nor know we of it more than so much as, through Christ's teaching, we read in books. This world, though it may sometimes seem gay, yet is no more like the world eternal than is some prison to the light of day. All mankind, as we before said, were blinded by lack of faith and error ; but

through Christ's advent we were drawn from our errors, and enlightened by faith. We have now the light in our mind, that is Christ's faith; and we have a hope of the joy of everlasting life, though we yet bodily dwell in our prison. The multitude that went before Jesus chided the blind man, and bade him be still. The multitude betokens our evil desires and vices, which call to us and occupy our hearts, so that we cannot pray so fervently as we ought. It happens frequently, when a man is desirous to withdraw from evil, and with his whole mind turn to God, that his old misdeeds, which he had previously committed, will then come and afflict his mind, and will still his voice, that he may not cry to God. But what did the blind man when the people would still him? He called so much the louder, until Jesus heard his voice, and healed him. So should we do so also, if the devil trouble us with manifold thoughts and temptations; we should call louder and louder to Jesus, that he drive the evil temptation from our hearts, and that he enlighten our mind with his grace. But if we continue praying, then may we with our cry incline Jesus to stand, who was before passing on, and to hear our cry and enlighten our hearts with good and pure thoughts. Evil thoughts cannot harm us, if they are not pleasing to us; but the more the devil terrifies us with evil thoughts, so much the better shall we be, and dearer to God, if we despise the devil and all his temptations through God's assistance.

“Then said the blind man, ‘Sir, do that I may see.’ The blind man prayed neither for gold, nor silver, nor any worldly things, but prayed for his sight. For naught he accounted it to pray for anything but sight; because, though the blind man may have something, he cannot without light see that which he has. Let us then imitate this man, who was healed by Christ, both in body and in soul; let us pray not for deceitful riches, nor transitory honours; but let us pray to our Lord for light; not for that light which will be ended, which will be driven away by the night, that which is common to us and the brutes; but let us pray for that light which we can see with angels only, which shall never be ended. To that light verily our faith shall bring us, as Christ said to the blind man, ‘Look now; thy faith hath healed thee.’

“Now some unbelieving man will ask, How may I desire the spiritual light which I cannot see? Now to that man I say, that the things which he understands and may comprehend, he understands those things not through his body, but through his soul; yet no man sees his soul in this life; it is invisible, but, nevertheless, it guides the visible body. The body, which is visible, has life from the soul, which is invisible. If that which is invisible depart, then will the visible fall down, because it stood not of itself. The life of the body is the soul; and the life of the soul is God. If the soul depart, the mouth cannot cry, though



it gape; nor the eye see, though it be open; nor will any limb do anything, if the body be soulless. So also the soul, if God, for its sins, forsake it, it will do nothing good. No man may do anything good without God's support. The sinful soul will not be wholly turned to naught, though it be rendered dead to good, but it will be dead to every excellence and happiness, and will be preserved to eternal death, where it will be ever continuing in torments, and yet will never perish. How canst thou now doubt of the eternal Light, though it be invisible, when thou hast life from an invisible soul, and thou doubtest not that thou hast a soul, though thou canst not see it?" The spiritual and evangelical matter of this extract will sufficiently apologize for its length.\*

We now notice the two points upon which the homilist is in decided antagonism to the church of Rome. He plainly *knew nothing of the papal supremacy*, simply styling the bishop of Rome "the Romans' pope," and "the pope of the Roman people;" never intimating that paramount authority and universal jurisdiction claimed for him as the successor of Peter, and Christ's vicar upon earth. In interpreting that passage of Scripture (Matt. xvi. 18) upon which Romanists rest these high pretensions, Elfric clearly cuts away the ground from under

\* Most of the extracts are taken from Mr. Thorpe's "*Sermones Catholici, or Homilies of Elfric*, in the original Anglo-Saxon, with an English version, printed for the Elfric Society, 1844."

them, applying to Christ what they apply to Peter, and assigning to his brethren, and to all God's ministers, the official distinction which they maintain to have belonged exclusively to that apostle. The exposition is thoroughly Protestant :—

“ The Lord said to Peter, ‘ Thou art *rocken*.’ For the strength of his faith, and for the firmness of his confession, he received that name, because he joined himself with stedfast mind to Christ, who is called a Rock by the apostle Paul.

“ ‘ And I will build my church upon this rock ;’ that is, upon the faith which thou confessest. All God's convocation is built upon the Rock ; that is, upon Christ ; because he is the Ground-wall of all the structures of his own church.

“ All God's churches are accounted as one convocation ; and this is built with chosen men, not with dead stones ; and all the building of those lively stones is laid upon Christ ; because we are, through faith, accounted his members, and he our aller Head [Head of us all.] Whosoever builds off the ground-wall, his work shall fall, to his great loss.

“ Jesus said, ‘ The gates of hell shall not have power against my church.’ Sins and erroneous doctrines are hell's gates, because they lead the sinful man as it were through a gate into hell's torment. Many are those gates ; but none of them shall have power against the holy convocation, which is built upon the firm Rock, Christ ; because the

believer, through Christ's protection, escapes the perils of the devilish temptations.

"He said, 'I betake to thee the key of heaven's kingdom.' This key is not goldren, nor silvren, nor forged of any matter, but is the power which Christ gave him, that no man shall come into God's kingdom unless the holy Peter open to him the entrance.

" 'And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, that shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt unbind upon earth, that shall be unbound in heaven.'

" 'This power he gave now to Peter; and also afterwards, before his ascension, to *all his apostles*, when he breathed on them, thus saying, 'Receive the Holy Ghost: the men's sins which ye forgive shall be forgiven; and from whom ye withhold forgiveness, from them shall forgiveness be withdrawn.'

" 'The apostles will not bind any righteous man with their excommunication, nor, through compassion, unbind the wicked man, unless he, with true repentance, turn to the way of life.

" 'The same power hath the Almighty granted to *bishops and holy mass-priests*, if they carefully hold it after the evangelical constitution. And, therefore, is the key specially committed to Peter, that all the community may clearly discern, that whosoever departs from the *oneness of the faith which Peter then confessed to Christ*, to him shall be granted neither forgiveness of sins, nor entrance of the heavenly kingdom."

Upon the second question, *the doctrine of transubstantiation*, Elfric is in the same unambiguous manner anti-papistical. In the sermon for Easter-day, he says :—

“ Our Lord blessed bread before his suffering, and divided it to his disciples, thus saying, ‘ Eat, this bread is of my body, and do this in remembrance of me.’ Also he blessed wine in a cup, and said, ‘ Drink ye also of this : this is my blood, that is shed for many in forgiveness of sins.’ The apostles did as Christ commanded ; that is, they blessed bread and wine to housel [for the sacrament] again afterwards in his remembrance. Even so also, since their departure, all priests, by Christ’s commandment, do bless bread and wine to housel in his name with the apostolic blessing. Now, some men have often searched, and do yet often search, how bread, that is gathered of corn, and through fire’s heat baked, may be turned to Christ’s body : or how wine, that is pressed out of many grapes, is turned, through a blessing, to the Lord’s blood. Now, say we to such men, that some things be spoken of Christ by signification, some things by thing certain. True thing is and certain, that Christ was born of a maid, and suffered death of his own accord, and was buried, and, as on this day, rose from death. *He is said Bread by signification, and a Lamb, and a Lion, and a Mountain.* He is called *Bread*, because he is our life, and angels’ life. He is said to be a *Lamb*, for his innocency ; a *Lion*, for strength, wherewith he

overcame the strong devil. But Christ is *not* so, notwithstanding, after true nature *neither bread, nor a lamb, nor a lion*. Why is, then, that holy housel\* called Christ's body or blood, if it be not truly that it is called? Truly, the bread and wine, which by the mass of the priest is hallowed, show one thing without to human understanding, and another thing they call within to believing minds. Without they be seen bread and wine, both in figure and in taste; and they be truly, after their hallowing, Christ's body and his blood through ghostly mystery. Much is between the invisible might of the holy housel and the visible shape of his proper nature; it is *naturally corruptible bread and corruptible wine, and is by might of God's word truly Christ's body and his blood—not so, notwithstanding, bodily, but ghostly*. Much is between the body Christ suffered in, and the body that is hallowed to housel. The body truly that Christ suffered in was born of the flesh of Mary, with blood and with bone, with skin and with sinews, in human limbs, with a reasonable soul living; and his ghostly body, which we call the housel, is gathered of many corns, without blood and bone, without limb, without soul, and, therefore, *nothing is to be understood therein bodily, but is ghostly to be understood*. Whatsoever is in that housel, which giveth substance of life, that is of the ghostly might and invisible doing; therefore is that holy housel called a mystery, because there is

\* The sacramental elements.

one thing in it seen, and another thing understood. That which is there seen hath bodily shape, and that we do there understand hath ghostly might. Certainly Christ's body, which suffered death, and rose from death, never dieth henceforth, but is eternal and impassible. That housel is temporal, not eternal—corruptible, and dealt into sundry parts. This mystery is a pledge and a figure. Christ's body is truth itself. This pledge we do keep mystically, until that we be come to the truth itself; and then is this pledge ended. Truly it is so, as we before have said, Christ's body and his blood, not bodily, but ghostly. And ye should not search how it is done, but hold it in your belief that it is so done."

The sermon from which this passage is taken was published under the direction of archbishop Parker, in 1567, and the care of his chaplain Joscelyn, in order to show that the reformed doctrine in relation to the eucharist was not an innovation, but a revival of what had been maintained in England before the time of the Norman conquest. The work was entitled, "A Testimonie of Antiquitie, showing the Auncient Fayth in the Church of England touching the Sacrament of the Body and Bloude of the Lord here publikely preached, and also receaved in the Saxons' Tyme, above 600 yeares agoe. Ieremie 6. Goe into the streets, and inquire for the olde way, etc. Imprinted at London by Iohn Day, dwelling ouer Aldersgate beneath S. Martyn's." The Anglo-Saxon is given on

the left side of the page, and the English translation on the right.

Elfric, during his residence at Cerne, appears to have prepared a summary of admonition and instruction, at the request of his diocesan, Wulfsine, bishop of Sherborne, 981—998, suitable to be laid before his clergy, answering to a modern episcopal charge. This production, commonly styled his canons, because drawn up in that form, contains another celebrated article against transubstantiation, which was inserted in the “Testimonie of Antiquitie,” with a brief preface in the quaint manner of the age :—

“ Here followeth the words  
of Elfricke—taken out of  
his Epistle written to Wulfsine Byshop  
of Scyrburne. It is founde in a  
booke of the olde Saxon tounge  
wherein be xliij. chapters of Canons  
and ecclesiasticall constitutions, and  
also Liber pœnitentialis, that is,  
a pœnitential booke, or shryfte  
booke, deuided into iiij other  
bokes: the Epistle is set for  
the 30. chapter of the  
fourth boke, intituled be preost-  
sinothe, that is, concerning a Synode  
of priestes: and this epistle  
is also in a Canon boke  
of the church  
of Exeter.”

The canons are printed in “Ancient Laws and Institutes of England,” published by the Record Commission. The writer styles himself in the prefatory epistle a humble monk or friar, “*Elfricus humilis frater.*”

While in Dorsetshire, the homilist entered upon the office of translator of the Scriptures

from the Latin into Anglo-Saxon. From one of his works, a "Treatise on the Old and New Testament," addressed in an epistolary form to Sigward of East-Heolon, we learn interesting particulars of his literary labours in this department. To that nobleman he says: "Thou hast oft entreated me for English Scriptures, and when I was with thee great complaint thou madest that thou couldst get none of my writings. Now will I that thou hast at least this little, since knowledge is so acceptable to thee, and thou wilt have it rather than be altogether without my books." He then mentions those parts of the Sacred Volume which he had translated into the vernacular language.

The Pentateuch.—The translation of Genesis is preceded by a prefatory address to the ealdorman Æthelward, who, he tells us, had requested him to translate it into English, as far as the history of Isaac, from which period some other person had made a version of it before his time. The preface concludes with the following adjuration: "If any one transcribe this book, I adjure him, by the name of God, carefully to correct his copy by the autograph, lest by any mistake of the copier persons should be led into errors; the guilt of which will, nevertheless, devolve upon the transcriber, and not upon me."

Joshua.—"This book," he remarks, "I turned into English for prince Ethelwerd."

Judges.—Some parts of the Books of Kings. Under the Books of Kings were comprehended



the Books of Samuel, of Kings, and of Chronicles. Esther.

Job.—All that we have of Job is probably collected from Elfric's Homily upon the History of Job.

Judith.—“Englished,” says he, “according to my skill, for your example, that ye may also defend your country by force of arms against the invasion of a foreign host.” This was written when the Danes were invading the land. Maccabees—two books.

These are not complete versions of the above-mentioned books, since it was the object of the translator to furnish his countrymen with a version of those parts of the Scriptures only which he conceived to be most important for them to know. Hence, in Genesis, several parts of the 10th, 22nd, 23rd, 26th, and 36th chapters are omitted: Exodus terminates with the fourth verse of the 35th chapter: Leviticus contains only what relates to the moral law, nearly the whole of what refers to the ceremonial being omitted: Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua, are also incomplete, and the Book of Judges concludes with the last verse of the 16th chapter. He has commonly omitted long successions of proper names, epitomized the history and precepts in many instances, and in others verbally translated. These Anglo-Saxon versions, excepting the selections from the Books of Kings, Esther, and Maccabees, which are not known to be extant, were published by Thwaites, at Oxford, in 1689.

The Anglo-Saxons seem never to have possessed a complete copy of the Scriptures in the native idiom; though the Lord's Prayer and several of the more important portions were translated perhaps two centuries earlier than the time of Elfric. A version of the Psalms is attributed to Aldhelm. Bede was engaged upon the Gospel of John at his death; and a Psalter is said to have occupied the last moments of Alfred. There are several manuscript versions of the Gospels extant, made by different hands at uncertain dates. An edition of the Four Gospels in Anglo-Saxon was first published by archbishop Parker, in 1571, edited by Foxe, the martyrologist. The last edition was printed in 1842, by Mr. Thorpe, who founded his text upon two Cambridge manuscripts, consulting in doubtful cases copies in the Bodleian and British Museum. As specimens of the progress of the language, it may not be uninteresting to give the following versions of the Lord's Prayer:—

Old Saxon of the continent, the language most closely allied to the ancient Anglo-Saxon of England.

Extract from the Harmony of the Gospels, a poetical paraphrase, entitled *Heliand*, the Healer or Saviour.

“Fadar is usa friho barno, the is an them hohon himilarikea. Geuuihid si thin namo. uuordo gehuuilico. Cuma thin craftag riki. Uuerda thin uuilleo obar thesa uuerold. al so sama an erdo. so thar uppa ist an them hohon himilrikea. Gef us dago gehuuilikes rad

drohtin the godo. thina helaga helpa. Ende  
alat us hebenes uuard· managoro mensculdio.  
al so une odrum mannum doan. Ne lat us  
farledean· letha unihti· so ford an iro uuilleon·  
so uni uuirdige sind. Ac help us uuidar allun·  
ubilon dadiun."

Anglo-Saxon from ms. in the British  
Museum :—

*"Thu ure fæder the eart on heofenum· si  
Thou our father which art in heaven, be  
thin nama gehalgod. Cume thin rice; Si  
thy name hallowed. Come thy kingdom. Be  
thin willa on eorðan· swa swa on heofonum;  
thy will in earth as in heaven.  
Syle us to-dæg urne dæghwamlican hlaf; And  
Give us to-day our daily bread. And  
forgif us ure gyltas swa swa we forgifath  
forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive  
tham the with us agyltath; And ne læd thu  
them that against us trespass. And ne lead thou  
na us on costnunge; Ac alys us fram  
not us into temptation. But deliver us from  
yfele; Si hit swa."*  
evil. Be it so.

English of the thirteenth century :

"Oure Fader, that art in hevenes, halewid  
be thi name; thy kingdom come; to be thi  
wille do as in hevene, and in erthe; gyff to us  
this day our brede over other substance; and  
forgyve to us our dettis, as forgyven to oure  
dettours; and lede us not into temptation, but  
delyver us fro yvel."

There is very little that is unintelligible in

the Anglo-Saxon to a modern English reader. Of the Saxon *riki*, Anglo-Saxon *rice* or *ric*, (kingdom,) we have a vestige in the word bishopric.

Returning to the life of Elfric, we find him preferred to the dignity of abbot, certainly by the year 1005, or about twenty years after the death of his master Ethelwold, as he speaks of himself under that title in his life of the prelate, the known date of which is readily ascertained from its dedication, as follows :—

“Elfricus, abbot, a Winchester scholar, to the honourable bishop Kenulfus, and the friars of Winchester : health in Christ. Thinking it a worthy employment to commend to posterity a few particulars of our father and doctor, Ethelwold, (since whose departure [984] twenty years have now elapsed,) I have drawn together in this little sketch what I have learned from you, or otherwise on good testimony, lest haply, for want of a collector, they might be altogether forgot.”

Kenulf, or Cynewulf, here mentioned, a very remarkable man, had been abbot of Peterborough, from which station he was translated to the see of Winchester in 1005, and was in all probability succeeded in the abbacy by Elfric. The monastery, then called Medehamstead, was situated in a meadow (*mede*,) on the edge of the forests of Northamptonshire on the one hand, and a marsh on the other, of great length and breadth, stretching out into East Anglia. The woods on the Mercian side

abounded with boars and deers, the waters in the opposite direction supplying abundance of fish. The few inhabitants cultivated islands in the marsh, or subsisted by fishing, living principally in boats. This region, of uninviting aspect, had long been famous for its abbeys of Peterborough, Ely, and Thorney. They had all been ravaged by the Danes in the early years of Alfred, and lay in ruins, till Peterborough was restored by Elfric's old master, Ethelwold. A life of that prelate was, therefore, appropriate from his hands, not only on the ground of youthful associations, but as abbot of Peterborough, and it was suitably dedicated to Kenulf, as his predecessor in the station, removed to the bishopric once held by Ethelwold.

While abbot, the homilist and translator probably produced the works which have given him the title of Grammarian, consisting of a Latin grammar and glossary, explaining Latin words commonly used in conversation, and colloquies for boys, in which the pleasing method of instruction by question and answer is pursued, which is popular at the present hour. Elfric's grammar has a Latin and Saxon preface, in which he observes, that he undertook the work, "for the promotion of sacred studies, especially amongst the young," and adds: "It is the duty of the servants of God and ecclesiastical men, to guard against such a want of zeal and learning in our day, as occurred in England but very few years ago,

when not a priest could either write or translate a Latin epistle, till archbishop Dunstan and bishop Ethelwold encouraged learning in the monasteries." While an abbot, also, Elfric wrote his two Pastoral Epistles, addressed to Wulfstan, archbishop of York, 1002—1023, composed at his request, for the purpose of giving useful advice and information to the clergy.\* They were written first in Latin, but the archbishop suggesting that they would be more generally acceptable in the vernacular, Elfric sent him a translation, with a prologue, stating :—

"We have followed your grace's biddings, as you see, having translated into English the two letters which we had written in Latin, and designed for you last year. We have not exactly preserved the same order, however, as before, nor the same language ; but the sense is

\* The high consideration in which the writer was held appears from this production, for the archbishop was himself a man of no mean capacity. To him the collection of homilies is attributed to which the name of *Lupus Episcopus* is affixed ; since at the period they were composed, there was no other bishop in England whose name could be represented by the Latin *Lupus*. One of these homilies is remarkable for the picture drawn of the general misery of the country through the Danish inroads, which is traced to the crimes of the people : "Therefore it is in us all manifest and evident, that we before this oftener trespassed than made amends, and thereby this people has much suffering. There was now no good neither within nor without ; but there was invasion and hunger, burning and bloodshed on every side often and continually ; and ravage and slaughter, plague and pestilence ; murrain of cattle and sicknesses ; slander, and hatred, and plundering of thieves injured us very severely, and unjust contributions oppressed us exceedingly. Therefore, in this land were, as it may appear, now many years many wrongs, and fidelity wavered everywhere with men."

much the same. Let us hope that our endeavours may in some cases be a means of profit and amendment. There are others whom these discourses will not very well please, I know. But it is not advisable that we should be forever silent—never unfold the Divine will to those under our authority : if not the principal herald, who is to announce that the Judge cometh ? Farewell ! God prosper you !”

Elfric's remaining productions consist of an Epistle to Sigferth on the marriage of the clergy ; a treatise on the Trinity, addressed to Wulfgatus ; a compendium of Ethelwold's rules for monks, with additions : and that portion of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle extending from 990 to 1016 inclusive, is ascribed to him.

In 1013, the fen country was terribly ravaged by the Danish king Sweyn and his ferocious followers. Ingulf tells us that the abbey of Peterborough and the surrounding villages were first stripped, and then given to the flames ; that the abbot, who must have been Elfric, with the greater part of his convent, escaped to Thorney ; while the prior, with a few of the monks, fled to the isle of Ely, and ten of them, with the sub-prior, took refuge at Croyland. From Thorney, Elfric seems to have made his way to the court of Ethelred, and to have proceeded from thence to the continent, in charge of the queen Emma, a Norman princess. Returning upon the settlement of the kingdom under Canute, he is thought to have contributed by his good counsels to the peaceful

glory of that monarch's reign. Assuming the identity of the homilist and grammarian with Elfric, archbishop of York, he succeeded Wulfstan in that see in 1023, died in 1051, and was buried at Peterborough, where exactly six hundred years afterwards, in 1651, by an extraordinary accident, his bones were discovered. Gunton, a local historian of the time of Charles II., relates in what manner the church of Peterborough was sacked by the soldiers of Cromwell, between the 18th of April and the 5th of May, 1643. They defaced and partly destroyed the high altar, leaving it an unsightly monument. It remained so for eight years, when, in 1651, a private individual levelled it with the pavement of the choir. Its demolition brought to light two chests, containing human remains, each chest having a plate of lead, on which the name of the person was engraved. On the one was ELFRICUS, and on the other Kynsius, both in succession abbots of Peterborough and archbishops of York.

In closing this account of Elfric, notice may be taken of a liturgical monument of his age, the Offices of the Canonical Hours, which has been conjecturally ascribed to him. However doubtful this may be, the formulary has great interest from the absence of Romish peculiarities. Prayers and praises are addressed to the proper object of worship, the Triune God, no mention being made of angel, saint, or "maiden mother," in the way of invocation. It is also an important feature of the document, that the



directions and reasons for the observance of the respective hours are given in the vernacular language, while those parts which are in Latin, as the portions of the Psalms, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Doxology, are accompanied with a metrical paraphrase in Anglo-Saxon, making the entire service popularly intelligible. The Lord's Prayer is paraphrased as follows :—

" Father of mankind,  
 of comfort I thee pray,  
 holy Lord,  
 thou who art in heaven ;  
 that be hallowed  
 in the mind's powers fast  
 thy name even now,  
 Saviour Christ,  
 in our mind's recess  
 firmly established.  
 Come now to men,  
 Lord of might.  
 Thy kingdom, (even) to us,  
 righteous Judge,  
 and thy belief,  
 in our life-day,  
 within our mind  
 gloriously dwell.  
 And thy will with us  
 be performed  
 in the habitation  
 of earth's kingdom,  
 as it purely is  
 in heaven's glory  
 with joys celebrated  
 aye to ages forth,  
 Give us to-day,  
 Lord of men,  
 High King of heaven,  
 our bread,  
 which thou sendest  
 in the earth,  
 for health to souls  
 of the race of men ;  
 that is the pure  
 Christ the Lord God.  
 Forgive us, Guardian of men,  
 our guilts and sins,  
 and our vices remit,

the body's wounds,  
and evil deeds,  
as we against thee, the merciful  
almighty God,  
often offend ;  
so as we forgive  
faults on earth  
to those who against us  
often trespass,  
and them for evil deeds  
think not to blame,  
for the obtaining  
of eternal life.  
Lead thou us not for torment  
into woe's sorrow,  
nor into temptation,  
Christ the Saviour ;  
lest we impious  
to all thy mercies,  
through enmity,  
become strangers.  
And from evil free us  
also even now  
of every foe.  
We in our inmost soul,  
King of angels,  
thanks and glory,  
true Lord of victory,  
heartily express ;  
because thou mercifully  
by might redeemedst us  
from the bondage  
of hell's torment.  
So be it."

It does not always occur in the present life, that those who have been consigned to unjust obscurity, or visited with unmerited opprobrium, have had their memory snatched from oblivion, and their reputation vindicated from reproach. But this has occurred in the case of Elfric, the suppression of whose opinions, writings, and very name, was contemplated by the Norman prelates, and shamefully attempted by the falsification of documents, in order to silence his testimony against transubstantiation. The

justice due to a great name began to be done after the lapse of about five centuries, by the publication of his Paschal Sermon. It has since been more completely executed by the appearance of a collection of his Homilies, after lying in ms. for full eight hundred years ; while an acute and learned author\* has successfully exposed the artifices resorted to in order to hide even the fact of his existence. If Elfric, as the writer referred to anticipates, takes his place in our future history second only to Alfred, we may regard his case as a striking illustration of that decision of Providence, in the instance of neglected or ill-treated piety, recorded in Scripture, and sure to be fulfilled either in "the life that now is, or that which is to come :"—"I will bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day."

\* Regular Dissection of the Saxon Chronicle, 1830.

## CONCLUSION.

IN reading the productions of the Anglo-Saxon writers, even of those with the most sober and best informed minds, instances of extreme credulity perpetually recur; and we are apt to feel astonished at the simplicity, bordering on childishness, which could accept events often of a puerile kind as specially supernatural, and invest with the dignity of miracles, incidents now resigned to the "dull catalogue of common things." But in yielding to such impressions, we forget the vantage-ground, radiant with the light of scientific discovery, to which we have been advanced by Him who "changeth the times and the seasons," according to his infinite wisdom and love, and the very different intellectual position of our forefathers.

"When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things." The interval between the dawn and noontide of individual life is one of development and progress, during which the ten thousand

erroneous notions of childhood are corrected, its crude and imperfect conceptions of ordinary incidents acquire fulness and precision, and events which were profoundly mysterious to the infantile apprehension now receive a clear explanation. A similar advance in many respects has been made by the nation since the period treated of in this volume ; and to regard the credulity of our ancestors with surprise, is to measure them by a standard wholly inapplicable to their times.

In fact, in the absence of known natural secondary causes for various phenomena, they had no alternative, but either to remain passive spectators of them, unimpressible and incurious as the "trodden clod," or to refer to immediate preternatural agency as affording the true solution. The remark has been justly made, that it must have been hard at that period not to have believed in supposed miracles. The whole creation teems with them to an unskilled race. On the one hand, nature had undergone none of that anatomy, which has to us subordinated "the stars in their courses" to a hypothesis of gravitation, and resolved the many-coloured bow of heaven into the reflection of a sunbeam in the multitudinous prisms of a rain-cloud. All the illustrations which science at present offers to the hallucinations of disease, the delusions of monomania, the spectral forms which float before the fevered eye, and the extraordinary appearances of nature, were utterly unknown. On the other hand, a traditionally preserved

remembrance of the faith of their pagan ancestors in the imagined sublunary action of invisible powers of good and evil, and the decisive record in the Christian revelation of superhuman interferences in the economy of daily life, contributed to place all unusual circumstances, for which no parallel could be found within their limited experience, in the class of events to be looked upon with religious awe, as the special expressions of a Heavenly, or the inflictions of a Satanic agency.

To "judge righteous judgment," we must consider what our fathers were, and what we have become, not estimating them by the knowledge we possess, to which they were total strangers. Not charity merely, but strict justice, demands for the case of such men as Bede a very favourable verdict ; for a devout habit of mind is the true philosophical explanation of that ignorant credulity which is so offensive to modern criticism, displayed in his unsuspecting reception of miraculous legends. Would that the present enlightenment with reference to secondary causes were more generally connected with that distinct recognition of the First, that faith in the reality of His constant government of the world, that humble dependence upon His mercy and grace, promised to its sinful inhabitants through the merits of a crucified Saviour, which the earliest of our ecclesiastical historians exemplified ! To "understand all mysteries and all knowledge," will be found a profitless accomplishment in the judgment of the great

day, unless the life has been conducted "as seeing Him who is invisible," relying on his providence, yielding to the authority of his word, and receiving with true faith the gift of his Son, as the only medium of justification at that tribunal to which all flesh shall come. "The wisdom of this world," unallied with true religion, and unsanctified by its influence, "is foolishness with God."

The preceding memorials of some of the more eminent Anglo-Saxons, all, with a single exception, officially connected with the church, illustrate the rise of the national civilization consequent upon the introduction of Christianity into the land. However much great numbers of the clergy were abandoned to ignorance, sloth, and sensuality, in the ninth and tenth centuries, they were honourably distinguished in the seventh and eighth by the possession of arts and learning, not to be found in any other class of society ; and they promoted by their personal example an application to industrial pursuits, among a population before addicted to vagrant and marauding habits. From them the more accurate calculations proceeded which placed the divisions of times and seasons upon a settled basis ; through their efforts a knowledge of architecture, painting, and of various kinds of domestic handicraft, was spread ; on their lands the best examples of careful cultivation were to be seen ; by their labours in transcription beautiful specimens of penmanship were made familiar ; through the wise

occupation of their leisure the practice of surgery and medicine lost much of its rudeness ; by their influence provision was made for the poor and the sick ; and in their schools the rudiments of instruction were given ; while various pursuits were originated, tending to delight and humanize society. To men imbued with the spirit of the gospel, and submissive to its counsels, though only dimly apprehending some of its truths, England is indebted for those germs of civilization, which, under the blessing of God, took root in the land, have survived many an adverse season, and have now gained a development which places us in the van of the nations of the globe. Let the humble and grateful acknowledgment be made to the supreme Disposer of events : “ Both riches and honour come of thee ; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all ; ” and ever let it be deemed a sacred obligation, to render temporal distinction subservient to the wise and holy purposes of his will.

It was unhappily the case, that the gospel did not come in all its Divine integrity to our fathers, but with some of its glorious truths obscured, and its precepts perverted, by the superadded inventions of men. Reference has been made to doctrinal and ritual errors. There was that mistaken view of separation from the world prevalent which monasticism involves ; a penitential discipline observed tending to substitute bodily service for



the "broken spirit" and the "contrite heart;" an imperfect entertainment frequently given to the cardinal doctrine of inspiration, that the sinner can alone obtain mercy, and be justified in the sight of God, through faith in the atonement of the cross of Christ; excessive superstition with regard to relics; and that invocation offered to departed saints, which the sense of Scripture so decisively opposes, while it is equally repugnant to reason, and dangerous as likely to withdraw the mind from higher objects of worship. These are not exclusive peculiarities of Romanism, but rather features of that heretical departure from "the faith once delivered unto the saints," which invaded eastern and western Christendom in the post-apostolic age; and at the period of their introduction into our country, the conduct of the Bereans, who "searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so," could not be pursued, for want of access to the inspired authorities. It deserves remark, in relation to the last particular named, the custom of intreating the intercession of the departed saints, that in Anglo-Saxon writings there are no traces of that blasphemous Mariolatry, by which the modern church of Rome is so shamefully disgraced, while the practice of such invocation cannot be considered a prevailing usage until a period but little removed from the Conquest. Liturgical forms extant, and private devotional pieces, bear testimony to the comparative purity of public and private worship.

## PRAYERS IN SAXON.

## I.

O dear Lord,  
O good Judge,  
spare me,  
eternal Potentate.  
I know my soul  
wounded by sins;  
heal thou her,  
Lord of heavens;  
and cure thou her,  
Prince of life;  
for thou most easily canst  
of all physicians  
that have been  
far and wide.

## II.

I confess to thee,  
Almighty God,  
that I believe on thee,  
dear Saviour,  
that thou art the great  
and the strong in might,  
and the lowly  
of all gods,  
and the eternal King  
of all creatures;  
and I am the little, before thee,  
and the wicked man,  
who here sin  
very abundantly;  
day and night,  
do as I should not,  
(sometimes with work,  
sometimes with word,  
sometimes with thought,  
horribly guilty,)  
heinous offences  
oft and frequently.  
But I beseech thee now,  
Lord of heavens,  
and pray to thee,  
best of princes,  
that thou have mercy on me,  
mighty Lord,  
high King of heavens,  
and the Holy Ghost;  
and assist me,  
Father Almighty,  
that I thy will  
may perform,

ere I from this meagre  
life depart.  
Refuse not thou me,  
Lord of glory;  
but grant me,  
most glorious King;  
let me with angels  
mount aloft,  
sit in the sky,  
praise heaven's God  
with holy speech  
ages without end.  
Amen.

But if a leaven of error pervaded the views and ritual of the Anglo-Saxon church, it is gratifying to know that its testimony upon the fundamental principles of the Christian faith is not an "uncertain sound," and that in rejecting the distinctive doctrines of modern Romanism, our forefathers before the Norman conquest believed with us. The clergy never put forward that shocking claim to consideration which afterwards became so common—the power to make their Creator in the sacrament of the eucharist—a power upon which the Council of Trent placed the stamp of its authority; but a formal protest was uttered against the tenet of transubstantiation in the days of its infancy. They knew nothing of the papal supremacy, as defined and asserted in a subsequent age; and indignantly pronounced against the worship of images, as "that which God's church altogether execrates." To these and other novelties, invented by the "man of sin," ancient England was a stranger; and hence the glorious Reformation was not an innovating process, but a return of the nation to the abandoned path of its ancestry.

Examples of missionary ardour have been noticed in the foregoing pages. Though not in possession of fully enlightened views, or always acting in the most becoming manner, yet it must be conceded to many of the early Anglo-Saxons, that they gave evidence of obeying "from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto them," by regarding it not only as a priceless advantage to themselves, but as a precious deposit committed to their trust, for the benefit of tribes and nations involved in pagan darkness. Hence, to fulfil the obligation, they left their native land, associated with barbarous communities, and laboured to wean them from bloody idolatries to the mild and merciful rule of the Prince of Peace, willing themselves, if needs be, to suffer and to die for Jesus Christ. The first heralds of the truth in the countries of modern Holland, Belgium, Rhenish Prussia, the Saxon Duchies, other parts of Germany, and southern Denmark, came from the shores of England. A similar service is specially the high design of Providence in relation to the present Anglo-Saxon race, forming in the British empire and the United States of America the two most energetic, advanced, and Christian nations of the globe. To them has been committed an unwonted acquisition of power and territory, while their resources in learning and truth, in wealth and enterprise, in useful arts and inventions, the elements of an all-controlling influence, are immense. Their ships are sailing in every

accessible sea. Their free institutions, civilized habits, commerce, language, and colonies, are rapidly extending over the habitable earth. The hand of God is to be discerned in these arrangements, and equally so his will, that such extraordinary facilities for the universal diffusion of the gospel of his Son should be used for that purpose. Let Britain and America remember their responsibility, and, humbly depending upon the Divine blessing, endeavour to discharge their mission.

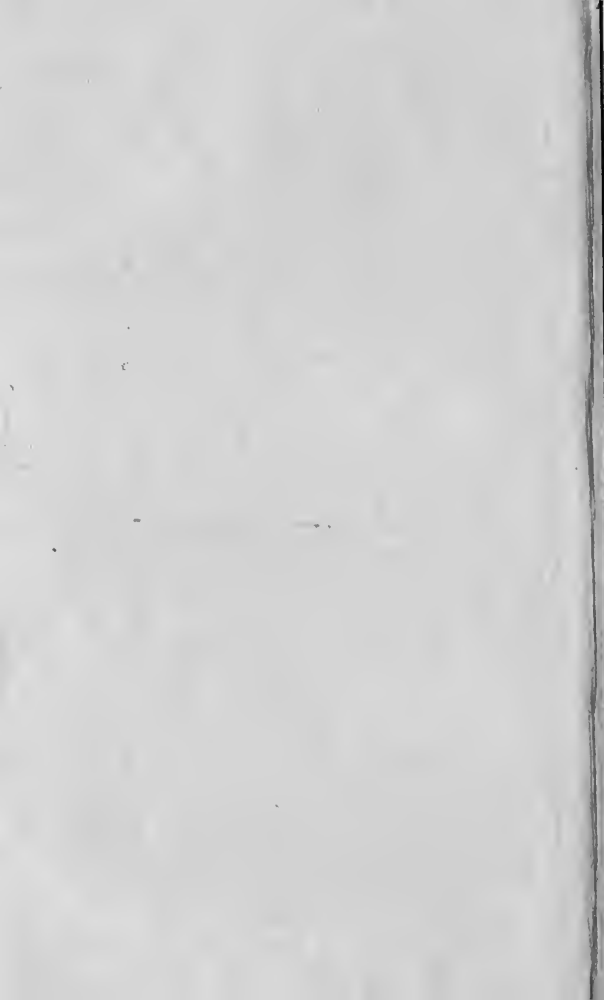
With unmingled satisfaction we dwell upon the labours of the learned Anglo-Saxons in the department of Biblical literature. The crafty fiction of the Romanists, that the church possesses an unwritten word, handed down by tradition, rendering an appeal to the written document unnecessary, formed no part of their creed. Nor was it supposed that the command of Christ, "Search the Scriptures," was uttered under reservation, the common people being overlooked in the application of it. On the contrary, there was a laudable anxiety manifest to spread the knowledge of the word of God; and by numerous versions and paraphrases of the Old and New Testaments in the vernacular language, those books were made known to the laity. Considering the laborious task of transcription, the number of manuscripts executed involved an immense amount of time and toil. Still, from the circumstances of the case, there could only be a very limited distribution of the oracles of God, and only the wealthy could command the means of purchas-

ing a copy. It is widely different with ourselves, the present Anglo-Saxon or English race. God's holy word is not now the exclusive heritage of the prince or the noble, but is brought by its cheapness, or its gratuitous circulation, within reach of the humblest classes of society, who may know for themselves, by direct appeal to the inspired record, how the question is answered, "What must I do to be saved?" A clear solution of this all-important matter is one of the sayings of the "prophecy of this book." It shows us man sinning, but God saving; the guilty parents of mankind driven from their Paradise, but a way opened for the return of their posterity to another and a better; the Son of God undertaking for a fallen race, and amid the impressive solemnities of Calvary laying a foundation for the free and honourable exercise of mercy to the sons of Adam. Let the reader of this volume remember his obligations to study, and to derive from the Divine word that profit which it is intended to impart; to accept it as his only guide-book to the heavenly world; to peruse it with simplicity of mind, with self-application and self-examination; above all, with fervent prayer for the influence of the Holy Spirit, to remove all natural insensibility to Divine truth, and induce a cordial submission to the gracious testimony, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

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